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A Walk in the Park

by CHARLES L. MEE

A dozen randomly scattered outdoor chairs
set out on a wide gravel path through a park.

A line of trees.

A fabulous branch of cherry blossoms.

A statue of a goddess running with one arm reaching up and out.

A park bench.

At the very center, a café, facing front,
with a half-dozen round café tables with chairs.
Not just a little café off to one side,
rather: the café is the fabulous crown jewel of this place.

A man enters,
looks around,
looks around,
chooses a table,
sits.

A waiter comes out of the café,
takes his order,
and leaves.

He sits, blank-faced.

Another man enters,
goes to a table,
sits.
The first man looks at him.

A woman enters, stops abruptly, stands,
uncertain what to do.

A musician steps out.

It could be he steps into the round basin of a small fountain—
where, at the moment, there is no water.

The woman and the musician look at one another.

The musician starts to play.

Music.
Music.

He is joined by a second and a third musician.

They are a three-piece band.

The first woman begins to dance to the music.

Another woman enters, and then another—
one of them pregnant.

After a time, these two join the first woman,
and they dance to the music for several minutes.

As they dance,
a couple of other people come out,
look at the dancers,
and, finally,
take seats in the café
and watch the dancers.

Not just a few dance steps before we get on with the evening,
but a full, fabulous dance.

dance
dance

And a young man comes out,
and watches the dancers.

After a while
although the dance is fabulous,
the dancers just lose interest in it one at a time
and stop dancing,

turn,
and take seats in the café,
to the surprise of the patrons of the café.

Patrons of the café stand
and help the young women with their café chairs.

The young man hesitates,
then goes to a café table and speaks to one of the dancers.

THE YOUNG MAN
Excuse me.
Excuse me.

THE DANCER
Yes?

THE YOUNG MAN
I wonder if I might
take your photograph?

THE DANCER
What?

THE YOUNG MAN
May I take your picture?

THE DANCER
What?

THE YOUNG MAN
Could I take your picture?

THE DANCER
I don't think so.

THE YOUNG MAN
Or, if I were an artist,
then do you think you might let me paint you sitting at the table?

THE DANCER

What?

THE YOUNG MAN

Or,

would you let me paint you lying on the table
naked?

THE DANCER

I'm sorry!?!?!

[the pregnant dancer gets up from the table,
goes behind or to the side of the café,
comes back carrying a full-length mirror,
which she props up at a little distance from the table
and then looks at herself in the full-length mirror]

— or does she just look at herself in the café window reflection?

THE YOUNG MAN

I think of myself as an artist.

Of course, I'm interested in women, too,

I mean aside from art

that is to say

aside from thinking of women as objects of art.

[he is distracted for a moment by the woman at the mirror]

THE YOUNG MAN

I think of women as women, too.

Simply as women.

As human beings.

Or possible friends

or you know mothers or sisters

or lovers

but primarily as people.

[she gets up from the table,

takes her handbag,
and leaves

the young man watches her go
then turns his attention to the pregnant woman,
hesitates,
then speaks to her]

THE YOUNG MAN

Excuse me,
I wonder if I might take your photograph?

THE SECOND DANCER

What?

THE YOUNG MAN

Could I take your picture?

THE SECOND DANCER

I don't think so.

THE YOUNG MAN

Or, if I were an artist,
then do you think you might let me paint you
in front of the mirror?

THE SECOND DANCER

What?

THE YOUNG MAN

Or,
would you let me paint you in front of the mirror
naked?

THE SECOND DANCER

I beg your pardon!

THE YOUNG MAN

Because to me, you know,

a pregnant woman
makes me think of children
of continuing the species
of life going on, of course,
but also of sex
and so
to paint a naked pregnant woman
that seems to me such an essential work of art.

[she leaves

The young man turns to the third dancer, at another table,
who is trying to open her white parasol.

THE YOUNG MAN

Excuse me.

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE

Yes?

THE YOUNG MAN

May I help you with your parasol?

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE

I'm sorry?

THE YOUNG MAN

May I hold your parasol for you?

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE

Hold my parasol?

THE YOUNG MAN

Because, you know,
you hardly ever see a parasol these days
I mean, never, really,
you never see a parasol
I've never seen a woman with a parasol
and so this seems a little bit like

the chance of a lifetime
if I could just hold it for you
and perhaps
if you are going to take a walk
I could walk along behind you
and see where you go
and what a woman with a parasol does during the day
and maybe
you could talk to me
so you would have someone to talk to
and then you wouldn't feel isolated
and strangers wouldn't come up to you then
and hit on you
try to strike up a conversation
you'd be safe
and you'd just be able to enjoy the day.

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE
OK.

THE YOUNG MAN
What?

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE
OK.

THE YOUNG MAN
Really?

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE
Yes. Sure.

THE YOUNG MAN
I could?

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE
Here.
You can take it for me.

THE YOUNG MAN

Thank you.

Thank you!

I could paint you, you know.

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE

What?

THE YOUNG MAN

I could paint your picture,

I mean,

if you held the parasol for a few minutes

and you sat on the beach

then I could paint your picture

fully clothed!

fully clothed!

you wouldn't need to be naked or anything

I'd just paint you

fully clothed

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE

Really?

THE YOUNG MAN

Yes!

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE

Unh-hunh.

We'll see.

THE YOUNG MAN

OK. Good. Thank you.

[she hands him the parasol]

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE

Just stay a little behind me, OK?

THE YOUNG MAN

Yes. Right. Sure.

THE DANCER NAMED FRANCOISE

Good.

Follow me.

[She leaves,

with the young man following.

A very old old man, sitting at one of the tables,
drinking espresso,
wrecked and disconsolate,
speaks,
taking his time.]

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

If I should go outside

the wolves would come to eat out of my hand

just as my room would seem to be outside of me

my other earnings would go off around the world

smashed into smithereens

but what is there to do today

it's thursday

everything is closed

it's cold

the sun is whipping anybody I could be

and there's no helping it

so many things come up

so that they throw the roots down by their hairs out in the bull ring

stenciled into portraits

not to make a big deal of the day's allotments

but today has been a winner

and the hunter back with his accounts askew

how great this year has been for putting in preserves like these

and thus and so

and always things are being left behind

some tears are laughing without telling tales again

except around the picture frame

[and, as very old old man speaks,
the others all look at him
the way people would look at someone
who talks like this—
but not with exaggerated disgust or disbelief
just restrained, or even polite, incomprehension
or slight unease]

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

the news arrived that this time
we would only see the spring at night
and that a spider crawls across the paper where I'm writing
that the gift is here
the others putting ties on for the holidays
that we've already had it for the nonce
and that it's just the start this time around
if they don't want a centipede
then it's the horse and bull that sticks it into him
so that the lights will come on afterwards
and in the papers everyday

[While very old old man continues,
a contortionist
gets up from a table
and stretches
and that turns into contortions
and into his full contortionist's act.

One or two other circus performers
join in with the contortionist while the very old old man talks:

the nouvelle cirque act of balancing on chairs
or balancing on canes stuck in the ground

and a foot juggling act
—juggling a suitcase
or juggling the round table top of a café table,

such as Gina Althoff's juggling act
or Gummy Girl with the candleabra on her foot as she does gymnastics
or Yaijing Huang & Lifang Wang juggling umbrellas.

Or a breakdance hip hop martial arts dance performance
by the likes of Kenichi Ebina
(see <http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/179>)

Or else, not circus acts,
but some other stunning pieces of physical theatre.]

because the blackbirds at this time of year have always been like that
they straighten themselves out if they can manage one more time
and so the world goes on
and if it wasn't for their own self interest
none of them would leave his house
without first taking it apart as well they can
and this time it's my turn that makes it worthwhile
clobbering this worthwhile man
who doesn't strut his stuff day after day
and if he hits the jackpot this time
it's not his to win but goes to those dumb boobs ahead of him
and one more time he'll end up in the small boat
like you know and see ya later
cuz today's a holiday

[and then, from another table,
Gertrude replies,
cheerfully,
encouragingly,
as the contortionist and the other physical performers continue]

GERTRUDE

and then

If I told him

would he like it.

Would he like it if I told him.

Would he like it

would Napoleon

would Napoleon would would he like it.
If Napoleon
if I told him if I told him if Napoleon.
Would he like it if I told him if I told him if Napoleon.
Would he like it if Napoleon if Napoleon if I told him.
If I told him if Napoleon if Napoleon if I told him.
If I told him would he like it would he like it if I told him.
Now.
Not now.
And now.
Now.
Exactly as as kings.
Feeling full for it.
Exactitude as kings.
So to beseech you as full as for it.
Exactly or as kings.
Shutters shut and open so do queens.
Shutters shut and shutters
and so shutters shut and shutters
and so and so shutters and so shutters shut _
and so shutters shut and shutters and so.
And so shutters shut and so and also.
And also and so and so and also. _
Exact resemblance to exact resemblance
the exact resemblance as exact as a resemblance,
exactly as resembling,
exactly resembling,
exactly _in resemblance exactly a resemblance,
exactly and resemblance.
For this is so.
Because.
Now actively repeat at all.
Have hold and hear,
actively repeat at all.
I judge judge.
As a resemblance to him.
Who comes first.
Napoleon the first.

[a silence—
as the others try to take this remark in—
a bit of comic timing—
and then, again]

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

and it's raining all the green is wet
but feels like it was made of fire
and on their hands turned over tiles are jumping for pure joy
and wringing hands with pinky missing on the one who made me— sorceress—

[and now,
after a bit,
the old guitarist plays while very old old man goes on]

and after let them come to me to say
they have no time
that we can save it for another day
and it's now late
and that again and then already
well the soup is nearly ready
and the spoonful that I have to take an hour before is loving me
because it's certain also that they'll tell me then
that I forgot it
but this glassy air
the raindrops on the window
have their shadows upside down
so that you have to paint them from the bottom up
and if it wasn't so nobody would have made a single thing forever

[the guitarist finishes his piece
as we digest this gibberish,
and finally,
a disheveled young artist enters and asks one of the café customers:]

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

Is this the fountain?

A WELL-DRESSED MAN

I'm sorry?

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

Is this the fountain?

A WELL-DRESSED MAN

Well

[looking around]

I suppose this is "near" the fountain, yes.

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

Because I am looking for a kindred spirit.

A WELL-DRESSED MAN

What?

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

I am looking for a kindred spirit.

A WELL-DRESSED MAN

A kindred spirit.

[it may be the disheveled young artist steps forward
and faces directly front to perform this next text]

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

the flute the grapes the umbrella

the tree and the accordion

the butterfly wings of the sugar of the blue fan of the lake

one and incalculable outsized flood of doves

released drunk on the cutting festoons of prisms

fixed to the bells

good evening sir good evening maam
and good evening children big and small
damasked and striped in sugar and in marshmallow
clothed in blue in black and in lilac

mechanically malodorous and cold pug nosed

on crutches potbellied and bald
made of sententiousness sliced very fine by the machine
to make terrified rainbows

just good to be thrown in the frying pan

to the salmon-pink caresses of the leaf
a thousand times half-opened
and fixed detached
offered as music to the fires

and long trains of spangles waved and crazy so said

and splashed in glory

A WELL-DRESSED MAN

I see.

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

Do you?

A WELL-DRESSED MAN

Indeed.

Sit down.

I think you're going to feel comfortable here.

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

Thank you.

[he sits

and the very old old man
drinking absinthe,
at a table removed from the others,
looking existential and anguished and terminal
—even as a woman comes and stands next to him—
perhaps puts a hand on his shoulder or head
and draws his head to rest on her bosom—
speaks.]

VERY OLD OLD MAN

The melon slices
and the scraps of blotting paper
upside down
and snookering the surf
that licks its chops over a half a watermelon
its wheel barrow rattles in the whitish foam of someone's linen
laid out on the roof —
the smooth silk of her body lunges at the nacre
and the sword hilt thrust into the honey bun of where she dances —
the refrain that makes the jasmine twinkle on the vine
sings of a light that blows in from the garden
warm with love
and with a pinch of blue that dangles from the grapes —
the rosy evening flavor
whistles up its snail shells
in its arms it rocks a drop of dew
erupting in the lambkin's fleece
an onion unwinds its strings inside the caramel awakening of the moon —
the silver lace
the pigeons rise up making light of their sad plight

[the guitarist sings

sings

sings

sings

sings

sings

sings

sings

sings
sings
sings
sings
sings
sings
sings

while he sings
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
rain down slowly from the sky

men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them
men in baseball caps and T shirts with Brooklyn on them

rain down slowly from the sky
rain down slowly from the sky

in the late afternoon sky—
either in fact,
or in paper cutouts,

or small dolls,
or in film projection on the back wall
[if small dolls or cutouts, they remain suspended in midair?]

a guy in a baseball cap
identical to all the men who descended from the flies,
appears—
we're not sure whether he came down from the flies
or stepped out the café door to join his friends
while we weren't looking.
He takes off his hat before he begins to speak—
or, it may be,
if he has descended from the flies with the other men in baseball caps
that he has been saying this—
a piece of Kurt Schwitters's sound poem Ursonate—
as he has fallen from the sky.]

BASEBALL CAP GUY

Tatta tatta tuiEe tuEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuEe
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tee tee tee tee
Tee tee tee tee
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tee tee tee tee
Tee tee tee tee
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuEe
Tilla lalla tilla lalla

Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tee tee tee tee
Tee tee tee tee
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tee tee tee tee
Tee tee tee tee

[A nude woman enters,
holding a painting of a nude in front of her body,
and the painting has her body facing the opposite direction
from the way she is facing.

She speaks.]

NUDE

There are many kinds of men
and many kinds of women
and each kind of them
have a different feeling in them
about the baby that was once all them.
There are many kinds of men and many kinds of women
and there are many millions made of each kind of them.
Each one of the many millions of each kind of them
have it in them a little
to be different from all the other millions of their kind of them,
but all of each kind of them
have it in them to have the same kind of feeling
about the little thing that was once all them,
about the little things that come to a beginning through them,
about the little things beginning all around them.
There are many kinds of men and many kinds of women.

There are some
when they feel it inside them
that it has been with them
that there was once so very little of them,
that they were a baby,
helpless and no conscious feeling in them,
that they knew nothing then
when they were kissed and dandled
and fixed by others who knew them
when they could know nothing inside them or around them,
some get from all this
that once surely happened to them
to that which was then every bit that was then them,
there are some when they feel it later inside them
that they were such once and that was all that there was then of them,
there are some who have from such a knowing
an uncertain curious kind of feeling in them
that their having been so little once and knowing nothing
makes it all a broken world for them that they have inside them,
kills for them the everlasting feeling;
and they spend their life in many ways,
and always they are trying to make for themselves a new everlasting feeling.

[Circus acts:
a cluster of them.

First, the contortionist comes out again and does his piece.
And then the others follow one by one
until they are all performing at the same time.

Not just clowns,
though clowns might well be included,
but mostly amazing, stunning, unbelievable things,
the sort of things unicyclists can do
and gymnasts,
things that people gladly would pay admission to see.

For instance, here are hundreds of such acts:

http://www.talents-productions.com/agence-artistique_evenementiel_artistic-agency/index.php

Or else, not circus acts,
but some other stunning pieces of physical theatre.

And then,
a giant rock or boulder falls slowly against a cumulus cloud sky,
followed by a dozen more boulders,
or perhaps 40 huge pieces of building cornice
either as video projections
or as real objects.

We might take some inspiration for this from Magritte—
the big boulder in the sky—
but we might also take some inspiration from the video works of the artist Paul
Chan,
his projections of a rectangle of light,
with pieces of debris and bodies (rendered as black silhouettes)
falling from the sky.

So,
the rear wall could be Chan-like projection—
things that feel dreadful, and end-of-the-world-like—
while over the stage area
pieces of incredibly beautiful objects in three dimension
come down from the flies
so that we juxtapose astonishing beauty against despair.

There could be
several freeze frames that last several minutes—
just stopping to be overcome with their sheer beauty.
There can be exquisite light cues,
or, if the production can afford it,
a tree full of lights and a moon
and other set pieces that descend into the space
or come in from the wings,
to make the space gorgeous.]

Meanwhile,
after a moment,
the disheveled young artist speaks.]

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST
grapes in profile on the swarming blues

the blue striped t-shirt

and the greenish blue

the sugared blue slapped on the pink the purple diaper of the lilac
bunched up in the nest of the celestial purple
of the blue omphalos
of the camp bed straightened up

with sunny smells of she goats
and of he goats on the bank of some old mountain stream

[silence
the old old guy turns to look at the disheveled young artist
and then speaks to him consolingly
and then the disheveled young artist
engages the old guy in friendly talk
as two soulmates who have found each other
and speak the same language
and really understand each other
and love the exchange]

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN
to the salmon-pink caresses of the leaf
a thousand times half-opened and fixed detached
offered as music to the fires
and long trains of spangles waved and crazy so said
and splashed in glory

[a silence; and then:]

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

and rockets screamed and painted to the pearly distinct braids
to the solitudes seen all mixed up with the caressing burned distillations
to the branches and to the raised hangings
to the sordid little secrets

[the very old old man recognizes he has found a partner in conversation]

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

and to the unfortunate discoveries in digestions and prayers
vomited from a point
into far enamored sumptuous arabesques
and ritornellos of the decompositions

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

and tears to the spattered
and festooned arcs

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

labors torn in perfumes

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

and in crowns and diabolic sated processions

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

to the tendernesses prepared disappeared and undone
so late of each long trajectory
revolted enveloped stretched in the woods

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

to hooked and shredded trances in meat and bone
unfolded into veils and vellums oars
smack raised in flames

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

and good-byes rigorously projected
as bait to the crowd of mirrors
aping the drained apparition at the bottom of the raised lakes of the sun

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

with large brush strokes painting three quarters of the sideboard
buried in the mess of hairs
of the fur caulking with cotton waste
the belly open to the light

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

with large strokes of the icy roof of the stretched sheet of the water

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

armor screamed at the window
with all the strength of the gay bouquet in plucked apparel
to all chance and risk imagined.

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

the flute the grapes the umbrella
the armor the tree and the accordion
the butterfly wings
of the sugar of the blue fan of the lake
and the azure waves of the silks of the strings
hanging from the bouquets of roses
of the ladders one and incalculable outsized flood of doves released drunk on the
cutting festoons of prisms fixed to the bells

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

decomposing with its thousand lit candles the green flocks of wool

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

illuminated by the gentle acrobatics of the lanterns hanging from each arc string
and the definitive dawn
on the shrubs of ink

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

fresh butter lace fans open in sated scattered divinities

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

the incandescent crystal that sings on the wing
on the bee's wax of the rose-bush
gathers with delicate and supple spoonfuls the airy houses of cards
of the perfumed male voices of feathers oiling the road

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

the miraculous rainbow festoons of the jars full of milk

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

drinking with loud yells

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

the azureal blue

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

jumping with both feet on the tropics of the mirror
hanging with all hands at the window

[and now

a café concert

a little string orchestra

a woman singer

song

song
song
song
song

and, while the song continues,
the woman all in wedding white
with a white parasol
returns
—the guy still holding her parasol—

and all the dancers gather around her
as she takes center stage and sits at a table to fix her hair

as all the other dancers—
suddenly, as though they are backstage before a performance—
fix their shoes
or help one another with their hair
or with adjustments to their costumes

it may be that a couple of men roll out a bathtub on wheels
and one of the dancers gets into the tub
to lean back and soak

another takes a seat with her naked back to the audience
as her dancer friend brushes her hair

it may be that one of the dancers takes hold of a barre
and warms up

and one of the men
sets up his easel,
sits on a stool,
and paints the dancers

or, if one of the dancers wants to get naked,
the painter can paint her—
that is, he can put paint on her naked body

and, if it is a lavish, high budget production,
then a piano can be rolled out on stage,
the pianist taking his place,
consulting his music,
and,
eventually,
playing some ballet rehearsal music

In any case,
in time,
one man or another fixes his gaze on one of the dancers
and speaks,
while the other men watch that dancer, too,
or watch the man speaking,
and then,
a while after the first man finishes speaking,
a second man fixes his gaze on another dancer
and he speaks
and so on.]

THE DISHEVELED YOUNG ARTIST

When I was a boy
I could never get enough of watching my mother
at her make up table
pulling the hair back from her forehead
so that she could apply her make-up
the rouge and the mascara
the eyeshadow of a deep green
the scarlet lipstick
It was the fashion in her generation
to have the whitest skin
not just a pale or ivory white
but whiter than snow
and for this she had a special cream
mixed with lime
so that
after she had used it for many years
finally
it made all her hair fall out

and in the end
it turned her completely mad.
Still,
for most of her years,
she was beautiful beyond anything.

THE VERY OLD OLD MAN

When I was a boy
there was a pretty chambermaid at my mother's house
and I would notice her from time to time.
And then one day
a rainy day
as dusk began to fall
I was walking around the garden
when suddenly that girl came straight up to me
and took hold of me
took hold of me by the hair at the back of my neck
and said:
Come!
And I went with her
to her bed
and I have the only the vaguest memory of making love with her.
But what I will never forget
is that moment she gripped me so gently
and spoke that single word
and whenever the memory of it comes back to me,
it makes me happy.

[And now,
all the men gradually turn their attention to the woman at center stage,
the woman who had had the parasol,
the dancer named Françoise,
and now, in turn,
each one speaks while looking at her.]

THE YOUNG MAN

What I like to see
I like to see a woman
when she's not expecting to be seen

and in places where ordinarily
she would not be seen at all
when she's sitting alone in a café
when she's at her dressing table
putting color on her cheeks
when she is asleep in bed
when she is asleep in bed with another woman
when she is backstage at the ballet
putting on her pink tights
and I can inhale her perfume
I can inhale the scent of her hair
of the nape of her neck
I can know how it is for me to breathe
when my head is on her breast
and my eyes are closed
I can breath her in
I can sit with her in a café
holding her hand for an hour
my fingers twined among her fingers
while she smokes and talks to her friends
and she doesn't think to notice
that I am playing with her hand all this time
I can sit behind her then
and say
don't look around
don't look at me
just listen to my voice
just form a picture of me from my voice
and listen to my words
let that be all you take in
until you know me
until you have formed all your opinions of me
until your opinions of me are clear and firm and fixed
and then
you can turn and look at me
if you will
if you need to.

BASEBALL CAP GUY

When a woman speaks to me
and tells me of her most intimate thoughts and feelings
then I know
that a person can die and go to heaven.
When a woman sleeps
then she is defenseless
then, if she is naked
and the covers have come down around her waist
and one arm is outside the covers entirely
the fingers of her hand completely motionless
then it is possible to draw her with red chalk
to render her body
as though nothing stood between her skin and the air
between her skin and the atmosphere of the whole world
no clothes
no blouse, no undergarment yes
but also
no thought of any sort
no shame
no pose
no manner
no attitude
no demeanor
no reticence
or no flirtatiousness
no hiding and revealing at the same time
no resistance
no provocation
her body is being put to no use
it makes no suggestion
nor does it refuse anything
it is completely naked
it is beyond sexual
beyond merely enticing or arousing
it has the allure of her very soul
this is how naked she is when she is asleep
she is transporting

[And,
as they have been talking as they have been looking at her,
a photographer and a painter and a sculptor have come in,
and they are all making portraits of Françoise.

And then
when the disheveled young artist has finished speaking,
Françoise speaks.

And her speech rivets everyone's attention,
the men who have been speaking,
and the other dancers,
and anyone else who is on stage.
They are silent,
and transfixed.]

THE DANCER NAMED FRANÇOISE

There are many kinds of men and women.
Every one of the kinds of them has a fundamental nature
common to each one of the many millions of that kind of them
a fundamental nature that has with it a certain way of thinking,
a way of loving,
a way of having or not having pride inside them,
a way of suffering,
a way of eating,
a way of drinking,
a way of ending.
There are many kinds of them
but everywhere in all living
any one who keeps on looking can find all the kinds of them.

There are many kinds of them then
many kinds of fundamental nature in men and in women.
Sometimes it takes long to know it in them
which kind of fundamental nature is inside them.
Sometimes it takes long to know it in them,
always there is mixed up with them other kinds of nature
with the kind of fundamental nature of them,
giving a flavor to them,

sometimes giving many flavors to them,
sometimes giving many contradictions to them,
sometimes keeping a confusion in them
and some of them never make it come right inside them.
Mostly all of them in their later living
come to the repeating that old age gives almost always to every one
and then the fundamental nature of them comes out
more and more in them
and more and more we get to know it in them
the fundamental nature in each one of them.

Going on living
is what any one is doing.
In going on living
any one is doing that thing is going on living.

One in going on living is doing that thing
and in doing that thing
is one remembering
that any one is going on living and is doing that thing.

Each day is every day,
that is to say, any day is that day.

In each day being a day
and in every day being a day
any one being one going on being living in each day being a day
any one being one is being one doing that thing
being one having been one going on being living.
in each day any one coming to be one continuing being living
is one having been one being living,
having been one going on being living.

[And then:
Francoise stands up
and begins to dance.

Music.
Music
Music

And, finally,
all the other dancers join her
in a stunning dance.

dance
dance

dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance

In the end,
it turns out that the most dazzling dancer of all is
Francoise.

And, at the end of the dance,
Francoise turns
and dashes out—

with the parasol carrier following her out at a run.

The other dancers are all frozen in their final gesture,
holding it:
a vision of pure transcendent beauty.

They are frozen in a pose the looks like Picasso's painting of
Les Demoiselles d'Avignon.
Each one holds an African mask in front of her face for a moment.

And then,
explosively,
they break their pose
and all turn and dash out.

We hear again, faintly,
the music from the opening of the piece.

And the people who remain in the café
gradually finish their coffees or their glasses of wine

as the lights fade to late afternoon light

and, one by one,
the customers pay their checks
and leave

the last customer taking his time

as the lights fade to sunset

and no one is left in the café,

as the lights fade to dusk, and, finally,
night.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT:

Some of the texts for *A Walk in the Park* have been appropriated from Gertrude Stein's *If I Told Him*, *A Long Gay Book*, and *Many Many Women*, from *Ursonate* by Kurt Schwitters, and from Picasso's *Burial of Count Orgaz* and other poems translated by Pierre Joris, Jerome Rothenberg, and Diane Rothenberg.

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