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A Day to Remember Forever

by CHARLES L. MEE

Planet Earth.

The back wall is beautiful light blue
and puffy white clouds pass through from left to right
in the shape of
dinosaurs
and whales
and monsters

We see a half dozen cafe tables

and then some other things here and there,
things like:
a parrot
some plastic butterflies
17 pearl necklaces
the plastic head of a baby doll
11 spoons
some red lips
5 trumpets
a dozen sneakers of different colors
a tree branch covered with stars of different colors
or 5000 more of your favorite things from assemblage and installation art.
Just Google “assemblage” and choose your favorites.

The bride and groom enter
and look around here and there.

And seeing no one,
they sit at one of the cafe tables.
Now some other people enter,
and they, too, look around,
maybe one or two of them acknowledge the presence
of the bride and groom
with a smile and a nod,
and then take their places at other cafe tables:

a woman who is one immense piece of standing candle wax
with a half dozen tiny lit candles where her head should be;

a guy with flowers growing out of the top of his head;

a guy with an ultra white face,
wearing a fluffy pink skirt around his neck
and extra eyebrows of purple, red and blue;

and a woman wearing a body dance tight
so it can be painted with random black and white splotches
light green here and there
with purple writing on her arms,
her face painted white with an oyster shell over one eye
and black X mark over her other eye
with a red splash over her mouth and part of her nose
and purple hair.

And one of them speaks:

ONE OF THEM

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 now a few more people enter—

someone with a face painted by Jackson Pollock
and clothes painted in brightly colored squares and rectangles and triangles by
Matisse;

someone with a bright deep blue shirt covered with glitter;

and someone with nothing but flowers for clothes.

SOMEONE SPEAKS

I like dingleberries.

And I remember white bread
and tearing off the crust
and rolling the middle part up into a ball and eating it.

I remember wanting to sleep out in the back yard

and being kidded about how I wouldn't last the night
and sleeping outside and not lasting the night.

I remember stories about bodies being chopped up
and disposed of in garbage disposals.

I remember stories about razor blades
being hidden in apples at Halloween.
And pins and needles in popcorn balls.

I remember jumping off the front porch head first
onto the corner of a brick.
I remember being able to see nothing but gushing red blood.
This is one of the first things I remember.
And I have a scar to prove it.

I remember stories about what goes on in restaurant kitchens.
Like spitting in the soup.
And jerking off in the salad.

I remember laundromats at night
all lit up with nobody in them.
I remember being hit on the head by birdshit two times.
I remember loafers with pennies in them.
I remember my father's collection of arrow heads.
I remember potato salad.

I remember the chair I used to put my boogers behind. I remember my first
erections.
I thought I had some terrible disease or something.

I remember when, in high school,
if you wore green and yellow on Thursday
it meant that you were queer.

I remember that for my fifth birthday
all I wanted was an off-one-shoulder black satin evening gown.

I got it.
And I wore it to my birthday party.

I remember fantasies of someday reading a complete set of encyclopedias
and knowing everything.

I remember the little thuds
of bugs bumping up against the screens at night.

I remember picnics.

AND NOW

a couple more people enter:

someone whose big crooked Picasso nose is light green, half a face of light blue,
half a forehead of red, a cheek of yellow and purple,
and multi-colored hair;

someone with two faces—
a pink face with red lips on one side of the head
and a yellow sideways face with purple lips on the other side,
with green hair with little painted jewels on the left
and red hair with a purple flower on the right.

SOMEONE SPEAKS

People forget,
but
about a thousand years ago
they thought the world was coming to an end
so people sold their worldly goods
and gave away their money
and went to the top of a mountain
wherever they happened to be
to wait for the end of the world.
And they waited and waited.
Some of them may still be there.
The millenarians.
That's what they were called.

What they saw, finally,
was that
after the world comes to an end
life goes on.
That's how it was for the Greeks and the Romans.
That's how it was for the Millenarians.
Then, later on, a couple hundred years later,
people in 1200
they didn't even realize the world had come to an end.
They just grazed their sheep amid the ruins
and got on with stealing and fornicating.
When you go to Arizona
you see the levels of sediment in the rock
in the mesas that come up out of the desert
all dried out for thousands of years
hundreds of thousands of years
and that horizontal stripe of red in the rock
that was where the sea came up to
where you're standing now
it was nothing but underwater animals
and then the water levels fell
the fish all vanished
and here you are
sitting at a picnic table
thinking
how beautiful this is
like heaven.

AND NOW

a couple more people enter:
a guy with a big red mouth full of dragon teeth
and triangular red eyes
and long octopus arms;

and another guy who is just a metal cart on wheels
with a lovely plastic head on one shelf
a shoe on another shelf
some bottles of cleanser fluid on another shelf
and there is a speaker in his head so he can talk—

THE METAL CART GUY SPEAKS

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.

AND NOW

a couple more people enter—
a couple just in their white underwear.

SOMEONE SPEAKS

I was driving through the country yesterday
and I saw all these huge, gorgeous trees
and I thought
here they are

they aren't hoping to be rich or famous
they don't have a story to tell
all they're doing is growing and growing
and they're going to live a long time
most of them
some of them 200 years or more
and there are all these different kind of trees
and they don't care if they aren't like the tree next to them
they're just the trees they are
growing and growing
and having a wonderful life
and now I think
trees are my model of life
this is the life I want
the life of a tree.

AND NOW

A guy starts drumming on pots and pans with forks and spoons

and one or two at a time,
everyone gets up and dances
or does some solo weird moves
and does some other physical things—whatever the actors are good at:

such as:

several hula hoops around neck/shoulders, waist and legs

spinning the long ribbon on the end of the stick and dancing

dancing with gigantic— 15 foot wide— fans

someone with a thousand balloons

someone with 800 umbrellas of different colors

someone with a teddy bear made of glass beads

the actors do whatever special things they do

And then after lots and lots of physical performance

one by one

everyone takes their seats again in the cafe

and we have the group conversation

that would be a dialogue between a single couple

but it is spoken by a half dozen couples:

TOM

To me

if I wanted to have a happy life

I would just want to have a life with you.

EDNA

What do you mean?

IF you wanted a happy life.

You mean you don't want a happy life?

TOM

I do want a happy life.

Yes, I do.

Would you live your life with me?

EDNA

Yes.

I would love to. I love you.

TOM

I love you.

EDNA

Do you think we can be together our entire lives? Or things will change?

You will change?

Your feelings will change?

TOM

The way I feel

feels more certain than any other way I've ever felt about anyone or anything

it feels forever.

I've never been more sure of anything. I feel it so solidly within my whole self. I love you.

EDNA

I want to live with you forever.

HARRIET [speaking to George] I know how I feel.

This is how I feel.

GEORGE

And this is how I feel, too.

HARRIET

And you can count on it forever

you can depend on it

so it will bring you total peace.

MILLICENT

Could we be considered a couple? And tell people

when we introduce ourselves

that we are a couple?

TOM

It could be.

HENRY

Or not.

If you prefer not.

MILLICENT

I would like it. Because I love you
and just because of that

but also

just as a secondary benefit
it would make me feel so secure.

TOM

This is a feeling we like.

EDNA

Nothing better.

GEORGE

Security is such a rare thing these days. I don't understand it.
It feels so good
so warm
so eternal.

HARRIET

You would think it would be something everyone would hold on to
rather than just have a fling
have another fling
marry again and again
feeling always on the edge of the cliff anxious
and thinking it could all pass away
at any moment.

EDNA

And that's why
when I say I love you

I want you to know you can count on it forever
so we both feel secure in our lives
at peace
centered
relaxed

warm comfortable at ease happy.

When you think how we used to live in the ocean, in the salt water,
and you think
we don't live there any more:

really we just took the ocean with us when we came on land.
You know, the womb is an ocean really, babies begin in an ocean

and human blood has the same concentration of salt as seawater, and no matter
where we are,
on top of a mountain
or in the middle of a desert,

when we cry or sweat, we cry or sweat seawater.

In the beginning,
all human beings were half human
and half animals,
like the ichthyocentaur,
which was half fish and half centaur. They were human down to the waist, they
were dolphins from the waist down, and they had the feet of horses or lions. They
were related to sea horses.

And so
for your diet
you shouldn't forget seaweed
nori, digitata, kelp, bladderwrack
because the body should only take in foods that come from wet places

We need to replenish
all those vitamins and minerals
that come from the sea.

This is why we recommend seaweed
and not just
as some people think
for body wraps
for your firming and toning seaweed facial but as they say
what is good for the outside of your body is good for the inside, too
because
we are all sea creatures
and we cannot thrive
unless we embrace our oceanic selves
and remember
always
to have an oceanic diet.

[Tom,
who went out a few moments ago, returns with a piece of installation art.]

TOM
I've brought you something.

EDNA
Oh.
What is that?

TOM
It's a tree stump.

EDNA
Oh. Yes.

[A decayed rotting beautiful tree stump from the middle of the woods
on a little red wagon.

Some of the others—seeing this—

leave for a few minutes and then return

with their own somethings:

a three decker hamburger
with tubes of paint instead of burger in the bun

a dress mannequin
on a stand with wheels
and hanging from the sides
a pitchfork and a big cane harvesting knife

a white pig covered in tattoos

5 foot tall upright silver thumb

the bust of a guy
with a hundred toy cars glued to his head

brown metal ammunition boxes

a detour sign for a chest

two dozen fabulous socks

AND NOW

someone brings in a performance artist
who has been cast in the show
not for any particular acting role
but just because he or she came in
for the set of auditions just for performance artists
to show the pieces they can do

and so now we see that piece of performance art
performance art

performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art

and everyone stands back after a few moments
and watches the performance piece

And when the performance artist ends that piece,
everyone turns and sits down.

SOMEONE SPEAKS

For me

the happiest place to be

is sitting in a cafe

SOMEONE ELSE

watching all the people walk by

SOMEONE ELSE

and seeing how is their hair

SOMEONE ELSE

how are their glasses

SOMEONE ELSE

how are their clothes

SOMEONE ELSE

the pants and skirts and shorts

SOMEONE ELSE
and blue jeans with holes cut in them

SOMEONE ELSE
things they photograph with their phones

SOMEONE ELSE
things they are saying on their phones

SOMEONE ELSE
this is the perfect vision of the world we live in

without people pretending to think or feel things they say

when they are talking to someone who is listening

but just walking down the street

thinking there is no one else anywhere nearby

so they just are who they are

and it is their true selves they are living

SOMEONE ELSE
and I get to see them and hear them

and wonder about them

SOMEONE ELSE
and find them really interesting

SOMEONE ELSE
or boring

SOMEONE ELSE
or weird

SOMEONE ELSE

or scary

SOMEONE ELSE

or really fun and fantastic

and love them

SOMEONE SPEAKS

I don't know.

I love to think about

birds nests from China

and about prisms

SOMEONE ELSE

a sitar

SOMEONE ELSE

or a stone taken from a vulture's head;

SOMEONE ELSE

jasmine

SOMEONE ELSE

narcissus

SOMEONE ELSE

scarlet ribbons

SOMEONE ELSE

a toothpick case

SOMEONE ELSE

an eyebrow brush

SOMEONE ELSE

a pair of French scissors

SOMEONE ELSE
a quart of orange flower water

SOMEONE ELSE
a tweezer case—
an amber-headed cane

SOMEONE ELSE
lessons for the flute

SOMEONE ELSE
an almanac for the year 1700

SOMEONE ELSE
petrified moss
petrified wood

SOMEONE ELSE
Brazil pebbles

SOMEONE ELSE
Egyptian bloodstones

SOMEONE ELSE
hummingbirds

SOMEONE ELSE
a piece of the stone of the oracle of Apollo

SOMEONE ELSE
Bucharest salami

SOMEONE ELSE
a Turkish powder horn

SOMEONE ELSE
a pistol
a giant's head
a music box

a quill pen
a red umbrella
some faded thing

SOMEONE ELSE
handkerchiefs made of lawn

SOMEONE ELSE
of cambric
of Irish linen
of Chinese silk.

SOMEONE ELSE
I wish they'd go on forever.

SOMEONE SPEAKS
There are times you might see a maidenhair fern
in a shady place
in a turf bog

SOMEONE ELSE
or in a meadow

SOMEONE
and each one of these has its own feeling
whether you have it in a dream
or in the waking world
And then you might see two boys playing with a bird
or an old woman feeding a cat

SOMEONE ELSE
silk stockings of the colors of the orient

SOMEONE
shoes of Spanish leather
rolls of parchment

SOMEONE ELSE
a bundle of tobacco

SOMEONE

and each one of these
may make you wonder
whether it has to do with the past or the future
or is only meant to
fill you with a longing
for such moments of life
in the afternoon
and the wish
that they should go on forever.

SOMEONE SPEAKS

I won't say how many shoes I've got
but I have no regrets about any of them.
In fact, there are some shoes I love so much
that I'll go out and buy double colors.
Because if it's like a great red shoe that's fabulous for the summer
and I love it
and it's the right color red
then I've got to have two—
because I know I'll live in the shoe
and it will get destroyed
and I'll need a new one.
That's how it is for me.
That's who I am.

How a human will turn out
they just turn out how they do
and then you know
but you don't know before
and then, later on, maybe they change their minds
and they turn out another way
and then they turn out another way yet again
and you never knew
because the human creature is a surprising, fluid event

oh, you can say, bla bla bla

but I don't think so

you didn't know how Simone de Beauvoir was going to turn out

you didn't know how Oprah Winfrey was going to turn out

you didn't know how Hilary Clinton was going to turn out

This guy said to me one time

I can't pin you down

like a butterfly, you mean?

I don't know he said

well, I said,

I don't think I want to be pinned down like a butterfly.

SOMEONE SPEAKS

Of all living creatures,

I really think the elephant is the most noble.

It will bury its own dead.

And elephants are chaste creatures,

and monogamous.

There was an elephant in Egypt once

who was in love with a woman who sold corals.

This same woman was loved by Aristophanes of Byzantium—and Aristophanes

rightly complained

that never before

had a man had to compete with an elephant

for the love of a woman.

And one day, at the market,

the elephant brought the woman some apples

and put them into her bosom,

holding his trunk there a while,

playing with her breasts.

They love a meadow filled with flowers.

They will bathe often,

and are well-known for their gentleness.

If fruit and flowers are placed in a ditch

and then the ditch is covered over with boughs and leaves, the elephant will fall in and impale itself on sharpened stakes.

You could say: I am not an elephant. And what would be wrong with that?

And yet

this is how the trouble

so often begins.

SOMEONE SPEAKS

I had a friend,

a psychologist,

who did an experiment on rats when he was a student in the university,

and when he finished his experiment,

he was faced with the problem

of what to do with the rats.

He asked his advisor,

and his advisor said:

“Sacrifice them.”

My friend said: “How?”

And his advisor said:

“Like this.”

And his advisor took hold of a rat

and bashed its head against the side of a workbench.

My friend felt sick,

and asked his advisor how he could do that—

even though, in fact, as my friend knew,

this was not exactly a cruel way to kill a rat,

since instant death is caused

by cervical dislocation.

And his advisor said to him:

“What's the matter?”

Maybe you're not

cut out to be a psychologist.

How would you kill a rat?

I don't know.

If you had to.

Hanging by the wrists,

burning with cigarettes

burning with an iron

hosing with water

hitting with fists

kicking with boots

hitting with truncheons

hitting with whips

exposing to cold showers

depriving of sleep

depriving of toilets

depriving of food

subjecting to abuse

beating with fists and clubs

hitting the genitals

hitting the head against the wall

electric shocks used on the head

on the genitals

on the feet

on the lips

on the eyes

on the genitals

hitting with fists

whipping with cables

strapping to crosses

caning on the backside

caning on the limbs

inserting sticks

inserting heated skewers

inserting bottle necks

pouring on boiling water

injecting with haloperidol

And when the performance artist ends that piece,
everyone turns and sits down.

SUSANNAH

Of all human qualities, the greatest is sympathy.

EMILY

Or compassion.

ANNA

Or compassion.

SUSANNAH

For clouds even.

EMILY

Or snow.

ANNA

The sound of a flute.

From a distance.

Or when you hear it nearby and then it moves away.

Or the other way around.

And the wind.

A brisk wind.

Or a moist gentle wind that blows in the evenings.

There are things that are near but distant at the same time.

SUSANNAH

Like the course of a boat across a lake.

EMILY

Like paradise.

SUSANNAH

I pray

I could see everything once more

everything that I have seen

lived through, suffered,
in the whole of the universe.
Because I am amazed
by the bodies
that are used and abandoned on the earth
in the dung beetle
the seagull
in the stub ash
the driftwood
the spring sky
blue spruce, pale eyes,
in my veins boiling
wet lips
black pitch
open window
from generation to generation

ANNA

I love a child eating strawberries.

SUSANNAH

An earthen cup.

EMILY

A new wooden chest.

SUSANNAH

A white jacket over a violet vest.

EMILY

Duck eggs.

SUSANNAH

Or beach parsley.

EMILY

Club moss.

SUSANNAH

The pear tree.

EMILY

The sunlight you see in water as you pour it from a pitcher into a bowl.

THE GROOM SPEAKS TO THE BRIDE

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

SOMEONE SPEAKS

I don't remember when I went to Paris for the first time

or the second time

but of all the times I went

one time I remember there was this guy

who turned out to be a tour guide in the Jardin du Luxembourg

and he was talking

and saying

this,

the Jardin,

is a very important place
this is where I had my first kiss
Mademoiselle Baert
She was my teacher.
I was nine years old.
And so:
she kissed me.
And there, by the pond
where the woman rents the little sailboats
my first time to put my hand on a woman's breast.
It was Annette.
Very nice.
Over there
next to the marionette theatre
it was Chantal
the first time I was dumped big time
I don't know what I did
she left me standing right there.
I think I did nothing wrong
but she never explained
and so
I will never know.
And there
where the woman takes the little children for the ride
on the pony
it was Simone
my first time my hand up a woman's skirt on her ass
it was
extraordinary
she kissed me
she was a lovely person
I miss her.
She could have been my wife
but she wasn't.
It was her choice.
Over there, by the tennis court,
it was Gabrielle
behind these trees
we made love

in the late evening
dusk
like a dream
that's all
like a dream.
Gabrielle.

Up there
next to the ice cream kiosk
it was Sylvie
we made love standing up
in the middle of the day
I don't know
I think there were many people around us
they didn't seem to notice
or else
they thought it was normal.
Sylvie and I
we made love everywhere
not just here in the Jardin de Luxembourg
but you know
on the bank of the river
in the taxi
in the women's room at Cafe de Flore
she is my wife
we are married 22 years
I am completely faithful to her
and she is to me
And we come here every Sunday
almost every Sunday to the park
just to take a walk
that's all
because
we remember.
And now, if you will follow me,
we will come this way
and walk just to the Cafe de la Mairie.
I will show you the church of St. Sulpice
where I had my first encounter with a man.

SOMEONE ELSE

In the olden days

years ago

I used to drink five or six cups of coffee every morning

to get myself going for the day

really ready and full of energy

and able to work at anything—

and then I'd crash around three o'clock in the afternoon

so I'd lash myself with a few more cups of coffee

so then

around five o'clock

I knew someone was persecuting me

but I didn't know who

so I'd lash out at the first person who came into the room

and this wasn't good for a marriage.

So I switched to tea

and that was good

because tea will give you a nice lift

and you can float on it on into the afternoon

and it won't fade away

and it won't make you feel persecuted.

And I mostly drank Assam tea from the south of India,

and I visited the south of India once

and saw some of the tea plantations

which I thought were beautiful

and then

on the way back to New York

I stopped in the south of France

and I was introduced to rose wine.

And I know most wine connoisseurs will tell you

you should only drink red or white wine

that rose wine isn't really for people of good taste,

but everyone in the south of France

thinks it's ok to drink rose in the summer,

so I drank it

and then I drank it some more

and then it just became all I drank

in the afternoon and evening

performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art
performance art

and everyone stands back after a few moments
and watches the performance piece

And when the performance artist ends that piece,
everyone turns and sits down.

A conversation begins,
and the bride and groom listen.

SOMEONE
Sometimes I think
I would like to take you in my arms
and we would lie down on the back of a chicken
and fly up into the clouds.

SOMEONE ELSE
You could do that.

SOMEONE
And take you to the south of France
like they were saying
to St. Remy
with all the sunflowers
and the glass of rose wine
when we have lunch at that little restaurant
that has a children's carousel in the main dining room
and a toy car big enough for two kids to sit in together
and the camping trailer
you can sit inside and have them serve you lunch there
but we would sit outside
under the trellis
so that we could see the sheep

on the day that they have the running of the sheep
through the town?

SOMEONE ELSE

Yes.

SOMEONE ELSE

Would you take me in your arms
and lie down in that big overstuffed easy chair
in the shape of a fat man?

SOMEONE

Well, yes!

SOMEONE ELSE

Sometimes I feel like ten lightbulbs on the ends of the wires
twisting out from the ceiling.

SOMEONE

The lightbulbs with wings?

SOMEONE ELSE

Yes.

Or

I could be a bed filled with butterflies.

SOMEONE

I could be a little chair
made of metal strips
that make a little protective circle around a newly planted tree
where you could sit and enjoy protecting the tree.

SOMEONE ELSE

I could be a yellow haystack in a field for you.

SOMEONE

I could be a dog,
thirty feet tall,
made all of flowers.

SOMEONE ELSE

I could be an old wooden horse-drawn cart
with big spoke wheels
upended in a cobblestone street.

SOMEONE ELSE

I could be a boutique of antique corsets.

SOMEONE ELSE

I could be winged victory.

SOMEONE ELSE

I could be white birch tree trunks in a giant ice cube
melting in the sun.

SOMEONE ELSE

Did you ever have a peacock?

SOMEONE ELSE

No.

SOMEONE ELSE

I'd like to get a peacock for you.

SOMEONE ELSE

I'd like that.

And now the bride and groom
listen to another conversation.

ADAM

You know, I have known many women.
I mean, I don't mean to say....

EVIE

No.

ADAM

I mean just
you know
my mother, my grandmother
my sisters
and also women I have known romantically
and then, too, friends,
and even merely acquaintances
but you know
in life
one meets many people
and it seems to me
we know so much of another person
in the first few moments we meet
not from what a person says alone
but from the way they hold their head
how they listen
what they do with their hand as they speak
or when they are silent
and years later
when these two people break up
they say
I should have known from the beginning
in truth
I did know from the beginning
I saw it in her, or in him
the moment we met
but I tried to repress the knowledge
because it wasn't useful at the time
because,
for whatever reason
I just wanted to go to bed with her as fast as I could
or I was lonely
and so I pretended I didn't notice
even though I did
exactly the person she was from the first moment

I knew
and so it is with you
and I think probably it is the same for you with me
we know one another
right now from the first moment
we know so much about one another in just this brief time
and we have known many people
and for myself
I can tell
you are one in a million
and I want to marry you
I want to marry you
and have children with you
and grow old together
so I am begging you
just have a coffee with me.

EVIE
OK.

A silence,
and then the bride and groom have a conversation.

BRIDE
Whose woods are these?

GROOM
I don't know.

BRIDE
So.
I guess you could say we're lost in the woods together.

GROOM
I guess you could.

BRIDE
I've never been lost in the woods.

GROOM

Neither have I.

BRIDE

I'm glad I'm not alone.

GROOM

So am I.

I like nature,
but I'm a little bit afraid of it.

BRIDE

Well, sure.

GROOM

Of the dark parts especially.
I'd like nature better if it were better lit.
I think everyone is, you know,
basically afraid of the dark.
Even amoebas.
I mean, every life form,
you take them out of the light
and they begin to feel some anxiety.
I do.

BRIDE

I do.

GROOM

Light, basically, is how you orient yourself
and a person without a sense of orientation
I mean, if you don't know where you are
and where you're going
and about where you are on the line of the place where you are
and the destination where you're going
a person begins to freak out.
I think that's why
in jazz

they always play the melody at the top
and then
once you know the tune
you think: right, let them riff
because I know where I am
and I know that, in the end,
they're going to come back to the melody
You know what I mean?

BRIDE

Well.

Sure.

GROOM

It's like

a love story

you can just get lost in a love story because

we know

whatever happens along the way

we might get confused or we might get lost

or it's on again off again

and it goes down some blind alley

but that's how real life is

that's how it really is to be in love

sometimes you never know

sometimes it seems like it is just drifting

or it becomes hopeless

but it doesn't matter

because in the end

with a love story

you know

either they are going to get together

or they're not.

BRIDE

Right.

[silence]

Do you think
you could ever live in the woods?

GROOM
You mean, forever?

BRIDE
Well, for a long time.
Say, like five years.

[silence]

GROOM
Five years.

[silence]

With you?

[silence]

BRIDE
Oh.

Oh.

Okay.

With me.

[silence]

GROOM
Yes.

[silence]

BRIDE
Oh.

GROOM

I've thought about it before
living in the country
because that would be beautiful
and I've always found it frightening
cut off from the world
as it seems to me
all alone
and
with nothing to do
but wait to get to be eighty years old
or ninety
and die.

You know, you might have thought you were going to be a doctor
or go to the moon
or just have a nice civil service job
a career and all the ordinary stuff of life
not throw it away on a great sort of romantic gamble
like you think

oh
I'd like to go to the country for the weekend
but to just fling myself out into the universe
and drift among the stars
and have this be my destiny
take the gamble that this would be a meaningful life
and one you would really like forever
the only life you have.

I mean, not that I'm a morbid person
but, you know, it seems to me,
if you're out there alone
maybe with a farm and fields and trees
and the night sky, the stars
you start to think pretty quickly
how you're all alone
and you just have your life on earth
and then it's over
and it hasn't been much more than a wink
in the life of the stars

and you haven't done anything
that you think is worth an entire life on earth
so I've always felt a lot safer living in the city
where you can't see the stars at night.

BRIDE

Unh-hunh.

GROOM

There you have your friends and things to do
you get all caught up
and it's fun
I'm not against having fun
what I mean is
going to movies, having dinner, hanging out
you can forget entirely that you're a mortal person
it seems: this could go on forever
until, I suppose, you meet someone, and you think:

[silence]

I could live with you forever in the woods.
And that would be a life.

BRIDE

Shall we take a walk in the woods?

GROOM

Good idea.
Let's do that.

[They get up and join hands.]

BRIDE

I do.

GROOM

I do.

They leave.

A piano is brought out for someone to play
and someone else steps over to the piano and sings along sings along
sings along
sings along
sings along
sings along
sings along
sings along
sings along
sings along

a woman is lying on the floor
a guy leans down and locks lips with her
and raises her from the floor into a flamenco-like dance
with lips permanently locked in a kiss
they go on and on and on and on and on
until he passes out and falls to the ground in a heap
she turns to another guy and locks lips with him immediately and they dance
but she stops them, interrupts the dance
to tell him he is dancing the wrong way
they lock lips and dance again
she stops to correct him again
ditto
ditto
until she spins around, grabs the sleeve of his shirt
and rips it
then he is pissed
they argue
they argue and argue and argue and argue and argue
till the guy turns front and takes a dance posture
and flexes his bicep
he flexes his bicep to the music
5 guys join him in bicep flexing dance
all in unison
then they all do a hip thrust
very macho
then turns upstage and wiggle their butts

(not SO macho)

they move through other male display dance moves

finger snapping, etc.

then three women step up and do the same male display moves

and dance

and, while they dance,

they draw on the paper floor with pencils and blood

red and black ink

with a sponge

so in the end you have a stage floor that looks like

a painting by Arshile Gorky

big music here

the red and black ink runs down the rake into the gutter 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 that has come

with everyone spattered with this color of blood and dirt looking wrecked,
now a couple dances tenderly

THE END

Charles Mee's work has been made possible by the support of Richard B. Fisher and Jeanne Donovan Fisher.

