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# An Afternoon to Remember Forever

by CHARLES L. MEE

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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

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

dances

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  
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 dance

and dance

and dance

and dance

and dance

and dance

and dance

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

big music here

big music here

big music here

big music here

big music here

big music here

big music here

big music here

big music here

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

a couple dances tenderly

a couple dances tenderly

a couple dances tenderly

a couple dances tenderly

a couple dances tenderly

a couple dances tenderly

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THE END

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

