Daily Life Everlasting

by Charles L. Mee

A large grand front porch
with a white railing around it—
and chairs set out on the porch—
and a roof over the porch
and a grand staircase at center.

There are garage doors to both sides of the porch
with garage doors that slide up inside the garage roofs.

It is a yard sale.
We start off exceedingly neat and organized,
with excruciating exactitude,
and,
as more and more stuff is brought in,
the stage will be filled with a wild chaos of stuff.

So, for now,
there are three lovely dresses on hangars,
two dark blue suits on hangars,
seven table lamps in a rigidly neat row,
six pots of flowers
three children's toy cars
eight little kitchen clocks
seven identical stone garden statues
six reclining beach chairs
two red buckets with mop handles sticking out of them
seventeen prescription pill bottles in a perfectly neat row
nine globes of the world
fifty eight dice of all sizes and colors
fourteen child-size soft toys of stuffed monkeys and clowns
—and some other things like that.
And then there is a tall floor lamp
with an extra large lampshade
made of underpants.
The lampshade has four metal rings
from which underpants are hanging,
both men's and women's underpants.

We hear music.
Trumpets and drums!

And a full orchestra.

One of the garage doors slowly opens
and eight people are standing there having a party
a few of them holding wine glasses in their hands.
They all slowly turn and see the audience.

A woman holding a small harp in her hands
steps forward
and sings solo:

Dal mio Permesso amato,
the prologue from Monteverdi’s Orfeo ed Euridice

and,
after her first bit of solo,
she is joined by the whole chorus of friends in the garage.

These are not professional opera singers,
and their occasional ineptitude should make it clear
that they are people at a party singing one of their favorite songs.
Maybe they are singing along with a recording of the song
(and maybe one of the guys on the side
is fussing with an antique record player to make a point of this).

And a note on casting:
it could also be that the cast would have, among others,
one extraordinary solo singer,
one cellist,
one world class solo dancer,
and all the rest would be actors,
so that all the text would be given to the actors,
but the cast as a whole would be so integrated
that we would not consciously notice that the actors don't
play the cello and sing like Metropolitan opera stars
and that the singer and dancer don’t speak more than one or two lines since they are otherwise involved in all the action of the piece.

SOLOIST [singing]
Dal mio Permesso amato a voi ne vegno,
incliti eroi, sangue gentil di regi, di cui narra la fama eccelsi pregi, né giunge al ver perch’è troppo alto il segno.

Io la Musica son, ch’a i dolci accenti so far tranquillo ogni turbato core, ed or di nobil ira, ed or d'amore posso infiammar le più gelate menti.

SOLOIST WITH CHORUS
Io su cetera d'or cantando soglio mortal orecchio lusingar talora, e in guisa tal de l'armonia sonora de le rote del ciel più l'alme invoglio.

Quinci a dirvi d'Orfeo desio mi sprona, d'Orfeo che trasse al suo cantar le fere, e servo fe' l'inferno a sue preghiere, gloria immortal di Pindo e d'Elicona.

Or mentre i canti alterno, or lieti, or mesti, non si mova augellin fra queste piante, né s'oda in queste rive onda sonante, ed ogni auretta in suo camin s'arresti.

[The English translation of these lyrics is given at the end of the script.]

A twelve year old boy enters in the middle of the song.

He will, of course, wander through the entire play for the entire evening, watching what everyone does.

But, at the moment, while the singers continue singing,
he goes to a table where
a shirt, pants, suit jacket, tie, porkpie hat, and shoes—
all of them pink—
have been laid out on the table.
And he picks them up one by one
and puts them on.

And he takes hold of the suitcase on wheels.

As the song comes to an end
the garage door closes very slowly.

A woman named Nan opens the front door of the house
and steps out onto the porch.
She sees the boy standing there.

THE WOMAN, NAN
Hello.

THE BOY
Hello.

NAN
Did you see something you like?

THE BOY [conscious of his own clothes]
Yes.
Yes, I did.

NAN
It's a yard sale.
So, if you have some money,
I can sell it to you.

Or,
if you don't have any money,
I'll just give it to you.
What's your name?
THE BOY
Oddyseus 2.0

NAN
Two point oh?

ODYSSEUS 2.0
You know, for the second millenium.

NAN
Oh.
So you're just passing through?

ODYSSEUS 2.0
Yes.

NAN
And do you think you can make a life out of all this?

ODYSSEUS 2.0
Oh, yes,
for sure.
Yes.

I can.

[Music!]

More of Monteverdi—a recording at full volume
and the chorus sings along—
see the lyrics below]

while
out of the other garage door:
comes a parade of dresses
both men and women in fancy clothes
both men's and women's clothes
men in men's clothes
and men in women's clothes
and women in men’s clothes—
summer and winter clothes
kids clothes
pajamas
a guy with an immense woman’s wig full of feathers
christmas outfits
fantastic outfits
swimming suits
underwear
halloween costumes

a fashion runway show—
coming down, strutting, then stopping for a pose,
turning, strutting off—
they enter, flaunt, exit
and then enter again in a different outfit
until they’ve all done two or three turns

These are the choruses they are singing as they strut:

CHORUS
In questo lieto e fortunato giorno
ch’ha posto fine a gli amorosi affanni del nostro semideo, cantiam, pastori, in sì
soavi accenti che sian degni d’Orfeo nostri concenti.
Oggi fatt’è pietosa
l’alma già si sdegnosa de la bella Euridice; oggi fatt’è felice Orfeo nel sen di lei, per
cui già tanto per queste selve ha sospirato, e pianto.
Dunque in si lieto e fortunato giorno
ch’ha posto fine a gli amorosi affanni del nostro semideo, cantiam, pastori, in sì
soavi accenti
che sian degni d’Orfeo nostri concenti.

CHORUS of NYMPHS & SHEPHERDS
Vieni, Imeneo, deh vieni,
e la tua face ardente sia quasi un sol nascente ch’apporti a questi amanti i di sereni
e lunge omai disgombre
de gli affanni e del duol le nebbie e l’ombre.
NYMPH
Muse, onor di Parnaso, amor del cielo gentil conforto a sconsolato core, vostre cetre sonore squarcino d’ogni nube il fosco velo; e mentre oggi propizio al vostro Orfeo invochiamo Imeneo su ben temprate corde col vostro suon, nostra armonia s’accorde.

CHORUS of NYMPHS & SHEPHERDS
Lasciate i monti,
lasciate i fonti, ninfe vezzose e liete e in questi prati a i balli usati leggiadro il piè rendete.
Qui miri il sole
vostre carole più vaghe assai di quelle ond’a la luna, a l’aria bruna,
danzano in ciel le stelle.

[The English translation of these lyrics is given at the end of the script.

And so the chorus ends with everyone in Halloween costumes
arrayed around the stage.

And a bride and groom enter in their wedding clothes.

A moment of awkward silence.]

THE BRIDE
Excuse me, is this the yard sale?

NAN
Well, yes, it is.

THE BRIDE
My husband and I,
we’ve just been married,
and we came right away
to look for some things for our new house
because we are trying to figure out
how to make a meaningful life for ourselves.

NAN
Of course.
JUNE
I have a copy of Plato's Symposium
that I picked up from the table here
but I would be happy to give it to you,
because it's all about love,
and it's a good starting place.

STEVE
I read it in college
back when I read all sorts of things
I love reading so much
I would read all the time
and especially when I would go to the john
I would sit there reading
and sometimes I would get so involved in a book
that I wouldn't get up for hours,
and I would miss my classes
until finally they put me on probation
and told me that if I missed one more class
I'd be expelled
and that's when I started to read Plato's Symposium
on the john one morning
and I got so involved
I missed my class
and that was the end of college for me.

EDITH
I like to read, too.
I decided I would read the encyclopedia.
The whole encyclopedia.
I wouldn't skip a single article.
And I'm only up to "C,"
but I'm having a good time,
and I'm going all the way to the end
and then I'll know everything.
GEORGE
When you get to "D"
take special care to read about Dante.
Because—
they won’t tell you this in the encyclopedia—
but I think if you read the Divine Comedy carefully
you will see that Dante,
with his levels of hell,
already had a very up-to-date idea of urban traffic control.

[No one quite noticed, amidst this talk,
that a love scene began very quietly off to one side.
And now, after this talk of traffic control,
they hear the quiet talk,
and they all turn to look at the couple off to the side,
and the couple gradually begins to speak more audibly.]

HORNER
What’s your name?

JUNE
June.

HORNER
I love you, June,
as I’ve never loved anyone before.
I thought
when I saw you on the airplane
the way you drank your cup of tea
I’d never seen such sweetness
such delicacy
and more than that
such balance
when the airplane hit that air pocket
and everyone bounced around
and the way you talked to me
I could listen to you forever
I could wrap myself up inside your voice
so gentle
and so strong, too,
and resilience
that's what I hear in your voice
a sense of who you are
and yet a respect for the person you are talking to
the truth is:
you are my model human being.

JUNE
And you
now I know why I haven't been married
because I've been looking for you
all these years
I knew I was right
even though I had no idea
I would be happy just to sit with you
in an airplane for the rest of my life
my shoulder pressed against yours
and to hear you laugh
because more than anything
I love it when you laugh
because nothing is more important
than the things that make a person laugh or smile
because your sense of humor
that's something you can't help
you can pretend you know something about novels
or you can pretend to be considerate
but a sense of humor is something you can't fake
what gets to you
what strikes you in a certain way
it's just spontaneously how you are
when you're not thinking
and I saw you
all the way from Los Angeles to New York
smiling and smiling
and I knew
I had to have you.
HORNER
Why didn't you say so?

JUNE
I'm a shy person.

Why didn't you?

HORNER
Because you said
you were coming to New York to get married.

JUNE
Oh. Right.

HORNER
And now
what shall we do?
I knew a guy once who married his sister by mistake.

JUNE
You did?

HORNER
Because his sister was marrying a guy from India
and they got married in India
and my friend's job at the wedding
was to carry the leis
because in India
the way they get married is
they don't exchange rings
but they put flower leis around each other's necks
and so the time came in the ceremony
for my friend to hand the leis to the bride and groom
but he got confused
and he put the lei around his sister's neck
so
officially
they were married.
So, I'm thinking,
we could do that.

JUNE
You mean
you could be the ring bearer
but instead of giving the ring to the groom
you could put it on my finger

HORNER
Right.

JUNE
And kiss me.

HORNER
Right.

[a moment's silence;
then:
he kisses her.

then he turns and notices everyone is looking at them]

HORNER [to everyone]
This is a play we're doing.
And I have some postcards I can give you
that will tell you where it is performing.

[he hands out postcards
while June says:]

JUNE
And, if you're thinking about
how to make a meaningful life for yourself
you know Aristotle said
that human beings are social animals
and that we become who we are in our relationships with others
and they say that theatre is the art form
par excellence
of human relationships.
So it would probably be good for you to go to the theatre.

[And then Harold steps forward and says:]

HAROLD
We have a love story, too.
And we can show you our story, too!

EDITH
The fact is:
I've never been in love before
I thought I was
but I never felt like this

HAROLD
What?

EDITH
And I'm thinking: at my age
how can this be your first time

HAROLD
Right.

EDITH
The truth is
I'm not a baby.

HAROLD
No.

EDITH
I've had a whole life
I've had other relationships in my lifetime
and other things, not even relationships
and people I've cared about

HAROLD
Yes, indeed.
So you've said.

EDITH
cared about deeply
people, in fact, I thought I loved
but it wasn't as though I looked at them
and felt at once I had to cry
because I felt such closeness

HAROLD
Empathy.

EDITH
Empathy.
Exactly.
Immediate empathy.
I looked at you
I almost fell on the floor.

HAROLD
Things happen so suddenly sometimes.

EDITH
Do you believe in love at first sight?

HAROLD
No.

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

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

HAROLD
Yes.

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

HAROLD
Right.

EDITH
Or I thought
I need to postpone gratification
and so I did
and I got so good at it
I forgot how to seize the moment

HAROLD
breaking hearts along the way if someone else was capable of love
at that earlier age when you weren't

EDITH
exactly
and now I think: what's the point of living a long time
if not to become tolerant of other people's idiosyncracies

HAROLD
Or imperfections.
EDITH
you know damn well you're not going to find the perfect mate

HAROLD
someone you always agree with or even like

EDITH
and now you know that
you should be able to get along with someone who's in the same ball park

HAROLD
a human being

EDITH
another human being

HAROLD
because we are lonely people

EDITH
we like a little companionship

HAROLD
just a cup of tea with another person
what's the big deal

EDITH
you don't need a lot

HAROLD
you'd settle for very little

EDITH
very very little when it comes down to it

HAROLD
very little
and that would feel good
EDITH
a little hello, good morning, how are you today

HAROLD
I'm going to the park
OK, have a nice time
I'll see you there for lunch

EDITH
can I bring you anything

HAROLD
a sandwich in a bag?

EDITH
no problem
I'll have lunch with you in the park

HAROLD
we'll have a picnic
and afterwards
I tell you a few lines of poetry I remember from when I was a kid in school
what I had to memorize

EDITH
and after that a nap or godknows what all

HAROLD
and to bed

EDITH
you don't even have to touch each other
sure, what
a little touch wouldn't be bad

HAROLD
you don't have to be Don Juan
have some perfect technique
EDITH
just a touch, simple as that

HAROLD
an intimate touch?

EDITH
fine. nice. so much the better.

HAROLD
that's all: just a touch
that feels good

EDITH
OK, goodnight, that's all

HAROLD
I'd go for that.

EDITH
I'd like that.

HAROLD
I'd like that just fine.

EDITH
I'd call that a happy life

HAROLD
as happy as it needs to get for me

EDITH
Sometimes in life
you just get one chance.
Romeo and Juliet
They meet, they fall in love, they die.
That's the truth of life
you have one great love
You're born, you die
in between, if you’re lucky
you have one great love
not two, not three,
just one.
It can last for years or for a moment
and then
it can be years later or a moment later
you die
and that’s how it is to be human
that’s what the great poets and dramatists have known
you see Romeo and Juliet
you think: how young they were
they didn’t know
there’s more than one pebble on the beach
but no.
There’s only one pebble on the beach.
Sometimes not even one.

HAROLD [to everyone watching them]
And we have postcards for our show, too,
that I can give you.

[So he begins handing out postcards.

Now there is background music
with a constant rhythmic beat
that repeats the same few bars of music over and over.

And one by one people step to the mike
and speak a song title or lyric.

Meanwhile, randomly, people see that one of the yard sale tables
has a plate of gorgeous strawberry tarts—
and so, one by one, they pick up a tart and eat it,
and, of course, often they are in the middle of tart eating
when they step up to the mike,
and so they stop eating for a moment
while they speak their song title or lyric.]
THE GROOM
Rubber Ducky,
You're The One
You Make Bath Time Lots Of Fun

THE BRIDE
Fairy Tales Do Come True,
It Can Happen To You,
If You're Young At Heart

HAROLD
A Crazy Girl Is Hard To Find

EDITH
Who Let The Dogs Out?
Who?
Who?
Who?
Who?

JUNE
Pussy-Cat, Pussy-Cat, Where Have You Been?

HORNER
Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland

HAROLD
Ev'ry morning, ev'ry evening
Ain't we got fun?
Not much money Oh, but honey
Ain't we got fun?

EDITH
Every Day Is Ladies' Day To Me

THE GROOM
Let me call you "Sweetheart,"
I'm in love with you.
THE BRIDE
I'm forever blowing bubbles
Pretty bubbles in the air

HORNER
I'm Always Chasing Rainbows

JUNE
In the Good Old Summertime

HORNER
You Are My Sunshine

GEORGE
"A" You're Adorable

STEVE
Aren't You Kind Of Glad We Did?

GEORGE
We'll build a sweet little nest,
somewhere out in the West
And let the rest of the world go by

STEVE
My Pony Boy

EDITH
I Want What I Want When I Want It

HAROLD
Oh, you beautiful doll
You great, big beautiful doll

JUNE
Where Do We Go From Here
Tell me where do we go from here
You said you'd take me through the years
So where do we go from here
[And now the soloist steps up to the mike.]

THE SOLOIST SINGS
Ah! Sweet mystery of life
At last I've found thee
Ah! I know at last the secret of it all
All the longing, seeking, striving, waiting, yearning
The burning hopes, the joy and idle tears that fall!
For 'tis love, and love alone, the world is seeking
And 'tis love, and love alone, that can repay!
'Tis the answer, 'tis the end and all of living
For it is love alone that rules for aye!
Love, and love alone, the world is seeking
For 'tis love, and love alone, that can repay!
'Tis the answer, 'tis the end and all of living
For it is love alone that rules for aye!

[And during the song
everyone who is not singing
rushes off
and brings stuff in for the yard sale.
And,
to keep the action going on for a while,
others can step up to the microphone,
and take over.

Like:

ANOTHER SOLOIST
I'm as mild mannered as I can be,
And I've never done them harm that I can see.
Still on me they put a ban, and they throw me in the can,
They go wild, simply wild, over me.

They accuse me of rascality,
But I can't see why they always pick on me;
I'm as gentle as a lamb, but they take me for a ram.
They go wild, simply wild, over me.
Oh, the "bull," he went wild over me.
And he held his gun where everyone could see;
He was breathing rather hard, when he saw my union card,
He went wild, simply wild, over me.

Then the judge, he went wild over me.
And I plainly saw we never could agree;
So I let the man obey what his conscience had to say,
He went wild, simply wild, over me.

Oh, the jailer, he went wild over me,
And he locked me up and threw away the key;
It seems to be the rage, so they keep me in a cage,
They go wild, simply wild, over me.

They go wild, simply wild, over me,
I'm referring to the bedbug and the flea;
They disturb my slumber deep and I murmur in my sleep,
They go wild, simply wild, over me.

Will the roses grow wild over me
When I'm gone into the land that is to be?
When my soul and body part, in the stillness of my heart,
Will the roses grow wild over me?

And:

ANOTHER SOLOIST
Ma, he's making eyes at me
Ma, he's awful nice to me
Ma, he's almost breaking my heart
I'm beside him
Mercy! Let his conscience guide him!
Ma, he wants to marry me
Be my honey bee
Every minute he gets bolder
Now he's leaning on my shoulder
Ma, he's kissing me
Ma, he's making eyes at me
Ma, he's awful nice to me
Ma, he's almost breaking my heart
If you peek in, can't you see
I'm goin' to weaken
Ma, he wants to marry me,
Be my honey bee
Ma I'm meeting with resistance
I shall holler for assistance
Ma, he's kissing me

[And, during the singing,
 with the things brought in one by one,
 we start with ordinary household items for the yard sale
 and gradually morph into wild art works.

So, first:
a decayed rotting beautiful tree stump
from the middle of the woods
is brought in on a little red wagon.

A girl or woman wearing a viking helmet with two horns
brings in a blue toy car in the shape of a loaf of bread
with six small flashlights in a row, sticking out the top of the car
that she pulls on a string
and leaves at the yard sale with the other items.

Somebody brings in a giant wire insect
and leaves it center stage.

Some of these items are arranged like works of art
by the artist Arman.
So there is a box of miscellaneous women's high heeled shoes
with a glass front on the box—like a box by Joseph Cornell.
And other such boxes of
tea kettles and house painting brushes.

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

A couple more Arman boxes:
a box of trumpets with a glass front,
a box of monkey wrenches.

One big shiny ball
with another one placed on top of it
kind of like a snowman
but pink or orange.

A perfect rectangle
made of crushed beer cans.

A vast assemblage of
giant red lips
the reins and bit for a horse
blonde hair
a red sweater
etc etc etc.
is brought in.

A violinist comes in with his violin
looks around,
opens a big wooden bin at one side of one of the garages,
puts his violin into the bin,
puts one foot into the bin
and stomps the violin angrily
so we hear the loud crunching sound
of the smashing of the violin

And then the guy comes in with 25 bicycles
upside down and sideways
and extra tires
and repair tools
setting up his bike repair shop on the sidewalk.
And then another guy comes in with the Art Car
(a sign saying: "prices on request")
A wrecked, ruined tiny car
a Volkswagen convertible or a Smart car
full of crap
with a sign saying ART FOR SALE
with awful Pollack like random scrawls of paint
and smeared, dirty places on the canvases
paintings and sculptures
and the guy wears a Warhol wig.

The singing ends just a few moments before the art car guy
finishes his tasks.
He stands for a moment looking it over
in silence.

And then:
Music!
Big Music!

It could be more Monteverdi,
just the music this time, no singing.
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!
Big Music!

And,
June and Edith come in with baby strollers and they do the baby stroller dance (eventually they are joined by Horner and Harold)

The bride of our honeymoon couple joins in the baby stroller dance but, of course, without a baby stroller.
She is lost, solo, among the women with baby strollers, imagining how it will be for her one day when she, too, has a baby stroller.

And, during the dance, an astronaut descends from the sky [or, in a theatre without fly space, he wanders in, lost, not knowing which way to turn or where to go.]

When he finally comes to ground, he takes off his astronaut helmet and sits down at a little end table, and Nan puts a cup of coffee in front of him.

When the dancing and music end, he looks up from his coffee and speaks:

ASTRONAUT
Dear God please send me something to help me please send me something to make sense of my life please send me a story a narrative that I can fit myself into something with a beginning and a middle and an end with a sequence of cause effect cause effect so I can see that things don't just happen for no reason at all but there is an explanation! a cause for every effect a logical explanation a reason so that I can understand my life on earth and everyone's lives on earth because I know
things can't just be happening for no reason at all
just because they do
and they have nothing to do with me
no
they must have to do with me
and my thinking they have to do with me is not just egocentric
and narcissistic
self centered bullshit
there must be a story that explains my life
and how my life fits in with other lives
and how that fits in with the destiny of the world
because
if there isn't a story
then I am lost in the universe
so please god
let there be a story
any story
even a bad story
a horrible story
but some story
so that I am not left here to think
that beneath my feet
lies an abyss of utter meaninglessness
the chaos of the universe
that cares nothing for me or my life on earth
that will just forget me in another hundred years
or thousand years
or billion years
and my life will have been nothing
but its own moment
a puff of smoke in infinity

I travel and I travel
I make my way
I am a brave explorer
seeing where I go
noticing the world I'm passing through
but I don't know any more how to find my way.
THE BRIDE
I know exactly what you mean!

[And now John speaks.
He is a disheveled wreck of an older man
with long messy hair
and a long foul beard,
an ancient beatnik
with rags for clothes.]

JOHN
The things you see along the way.

There is a great and mighty king
who hath under him fifty-four great isles that give tribute to him.
And in everych of these isles is a king crowned;
and all be obeissant to that king.
And he hath in those isles many diverse folk.

[This has stopped all conversation.
Everyone stands looking at him.]

NAN
This is my husband John.

[John looks at Nan for a moment in silence,
and then he resumes.]

JOHN
In one of these isles be folk of great stature, as giants.
And they be hideous for to look upon.
And they have but one eye, and that is in the middle of the front.
And they eat nothing but raw flesh and raw fish.

And in another isle toward the south
dwell folk of foul stature and of cursed kind that have no heads.
And their eyen be in their shoulders.
And in another isle be folk of foul fashion and shape
that have the lip above the mouth so great,
that when they sleep in the sun they cover all the face with that lip.

And in another isle be folk that have great ears and long,
that hang down to their knees.

And in another isle be folk that have horses' feet.
And they be strong and mighty, and swift runners;
for they take wild beasts with running, and eat them.

And in another isle be folk that go upon their hands and their feet as beasts. And
they be all skinned and feathered,
and they will leap as lightly into trees,
and from tree to tree, as it were squirrels or apes.

And in California there be businessmen
who have their heads up their asses.

And in another isle be folk that be both man and woman,
and they have kind; of that one and of that other.
And they have but one pap on the one side, and on that other none.
And they have members of generation of man and woman,
and they use both when they list,
once that one, and another time that other.
And they get children, when they use the member of man;
and they bear children, when they use the member of woman.

And in another isle be folk
that go always upon their knees full marvellously.
And at every pace that they go, it seemeth that they would fall.
And they have in every foot eight toes.

THE GROOM
I have done some travelling, too.
At one time,
in thirty-three days,
I sailed to the Indies
with the fleet that the illustrious King and Queen gave me,
where I discovered a great many islands,
inhabited by numberless people;
and of all I have taken possession for their Highnesses.

I headed south along the coast.
The seaports there are incredibly fine,
as also the magnificent rivers,
most of which bear gold.
There are many spices and vast mines of gold.
They have no iron, nor steel, nor weapons,
nor are they fit for them, because
although they are well-made men of commanding stature,
they appear extraordinarily timid.
The only arms they have are sticks of cane,
cut when in seed,
with a sharpened stick at the end,
and they are afraid to use these.

As for monsters, I have found no trace of them
except at the point in the second isle as one enters the Indies,
which is inhabited by a people considered in all the isles as most ferocious, who eat
human flesh.
They possess many canoes,
with which they overrun all the isles of India,
stealing and seizing all they can.
They are not worse looking than the others,
except that they wear their hair long like women.
Another island, I am told, is larger than Hispaniola,
where the natives have no hair, and where there is countless gold.

HORNER
I have done some travelling, too.

Hopping a freight out of Los Angeles
at high noon one day in late September
I got on a gondola
and lay down with my duffel bag under my head
and my knees crossed
and contemplated the clouds
as we rolled north to Santa Barbara.
Somewhere near Camarillo
where Charlie Parker’d been mad and relaxed back to normal health,
a thin old little bum climbed into my gondola
as we headed into a siding to give a train right of way
and looked surprised to see me there.

He established himself at the other end of the gondola and lay down
facing me,
with his head on his own miserably small pack
and said nothing.
By and by they blew the highball whistle
and we pulled out as the air got colder
and fog began to glow from the sea over the warm valleys of the coast.

Pretty soon
we headed into another siding at a small railroad town
and I figured I needed a poorboy of Tokay wine
to complete the cold dusk run to Santa Barbara.
"Will you watch my pack while I run over there
and get a bottle of wine?"
"Sure thing," he said.

I jumped over the side and ran across Highway 101
to the store, and bought, besides wine, a little bread and candy.
I ran back to my freight train
which had another fifteen minutes to wait in the now warm sunny scene.
The bum was sitting cross legged at his end
before a pitiful repast of one can of sardines.
I took pity on him and said,
"How about a little wine to warm you up?
Maybe you’d like some bread and cheese with your sardines."

I reminded myself of the line in the Diamond Sutra
that says,
"Practice charity without holding in mind any conceptions about charity,
for charity after all is just a word."
I was very devout in those days
I believed that I was an oldtime bhikku in modern clothes
wandering the world
in order to turn the wheel of the True Meaning,
or Dharma,
and gain merit for myself as a future Buddha (Awakener)
and as a future Hero in Paradise.
And he said yes.
And he had a little wine.

[Silence.]

NAN [to Odysseus]
You see
I hear this
I think
why don't they just stay home

because everything they saw
didn't they get it all wrong?

Why doesn't my husband just stay home
and he could be an archaeologist
and dig up the back yard
and he would find the broken cup
and the old spoon
and he could figure out from this
there used to be a civilization here
that liked to have brunch in the garden.

And this is what is called a life
the life I live
I look at the broken cup
and the old bus going by
and the corner café
and Dennis next door throwing snowballs at his daughter
the woman singing in the shower
and somehow
I put them together
because they are all here now
so I know
this is the world I live in
if only my head were bigger
and I could get my head around it
and see that it all makes sense
if my head is big enough
even if some pieces are missing
and there is a space
between the old spoon and the snowball and the dancing in the streets
I can be an archaeologist
and I will know all I need to know about the world I live in
without travelling outside my own backyard.

Because, also,
we have a history, too, you know.
Even though we never went anywhere.

[to Odysseus]

My great great grandfather was the first mayor of Omaha
and when his wife Sophia Hoppin came on the train from Providence,
he met her at the station with a wheelbarrow
and brought her home in the wheelbarrow
because the streets were all muddy.
And then
when my great grandmother was born
my great great grandmother was out on the back porch one day
and she noticed a cloud of dust coming closer and closer to the house
until finally a hundred Indians came up on horseback
and the chief got off his horse
and came up to the porch
and said to my great great grandmother
that he would like to take her baby
my great grandmother
to have her as a princess to marry his son
and he had brought gifts along with him,
and
when he said that,
some of the Indians who had come with him
got down off their horses
and brought armloads of gifts to the back porch
a beaded medicine bag filled with herbs
which I still have up in the attic
and a drum
and a headdress with feathers
and many other precious things.
And my great great grandmother
thanked the Indian chief
and told him she was very flattered and grateful
and overcome with admiration for the chief
and deeply moved by his request
but that her daughter was not for sale
and she must refuse his offer.
And so the chief said
nonetheless
he hoped my great great grandmother
would keep the gifts he brought
as a remembrance of his friendship.
And with that
he turned and left
and all the horses rode away in a cloud of dust.

**GEORGE**
What you want to do in life
is just keep on going.

**STEVE**
Never quit.
Never never never never never never quit.

**GEORGE**
and you will know where you're been
after you come out of the woods at the end

[And now
**BIG MUSIC!**
Everyone steps downstage
and,
facing front,
sings Monteverdi
in a big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus
big chorus.

Lasciate i monti,
lasciate i fonti,
ninfe vezzose e liete
e in questi prati
a i balli usati
leggiadro il piè rendete.

Qui miri il sole
vostre carole
più vaghe assai di quelle
ond'a la luna,
a l'aria bruna,
danzano in ciel le stelle.
Poi che bei fiori,
per voi s'onori
di queste amanti il crine,
ch'or de i martiri
de i lor desiri
godon beati al fine.

[They sing this two times. 
The first time they come triumphantly downstage 
and sing it straight out. 
The second time they move back upstage, 
everyone takes a beach chair, 
unfolds it facing downstage, 
and lies back, 
and then they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
they all sing the song again 
lying back happily on their beach chairs. 

And then: 
quiet.

GEORGE
The things you learn along the way. 
All animals except man know the ultimate point of life is to enjoy it. 
To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that's all.
STEVE
Everything you can imagine is real.

EDITH
A hen is only an egg’s way of making another egg.

HORNER
Close your eyes and you will see.

HAROLD
You can’t do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth.

THE BRIDE
God created man because he was so disappointed in the monkey.

THE GROOM
Everywhere I go I find that a poet has been there before me.

JOHN
The older I get, the better I was.

JUNE
If ignorance isn’t bliss, I don’t know what is.

JOHN
Know thyself?
If I knew myself, I’d run away.

GEORGE
Misery is almost always the result of thinking.

HORNER
Sanity and happiness are an impossible combination.

GEORGE
If you know exactly what you are going to do, what is the point of doing it?
STEVE
The truth is:
you set out on a journey
and sometimes you never come back.

JOHN
Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, sixth Fatimid caliph and 16th Ismaili rode his donkey to the Muqattam hills outside Cairo for one of his regular nocturnal meditation outings and failed to return. A search found only the donkey and his bloodstained garments.

Vandino and Ugolino Vivaldi, from Genoa, lost while attempting the first oceanic journey from Europe to Asia.

HAROLD
John Lansing, Jr., American politician, left his Manhattan hotel to mail a letter at a New York City dock and was never seen again.

GEORGE
Ambrose Small, Canadian millionaire, disappeared from his office. He was last seen at 5:30 pm on December 2, 1919 at the Grand Opera House in Toronto.

EDITH
Dorothy Arnold, socialite and perfume heiress, was last seen in New York City.

HORNER
Victor Grayson, British socialist politician, received a phone call and told his friends that he had to go to the Queen’s Hotel in Leicester Square and would be back shortly. He was last seen entering a house owned by Maundy Gregory.

JOHN
Percy Fawcett, British archaeologist and explorer, together with his eldest son, Jack, and friend Raleigh Rimmell, was last seen travelling into the jungle of Mato Grosso in Brazil to search for a hidden "city of gold".

THE GROOM
Glen and Bessie Hyde, American newlyweds, disappeared while attempting to raft the Colorado River rapids of the Grand Canyon.
THE BRIDE
Robin Graham ran out of gas on the Hollywood Freeway. She was last seen by California Highway Patrol officers, who directed her to a call box and later saw her speaking with a man beside her car.

EDITH
Genette Tate, age 13, disappeared while delivering newspapers in Aylesbeare, Devon, England.

THE BRIDE
Tom and Eileen Lonergan, an American couple left stranded in the ocean, owing to a faulty head count while scuba diving in shark-infested waters off Australia’s Great Barrier Reef, were never seen again.

[And now, once again, music, but this time gentle music]
Eventually, as the music continues, someone gets up from a beach chair, goes out, and returns with something else for the yard sale.

And then someone else does the same thing.

And, finally, everyone is up and going in and out bringing in more things for the yard sale:

a kid’s red wagon
with three tv sets attached to poles that stick up from the center of the wagon

a cocktail bar and tv set
on top of a giant, bed-sized pillow

an orange body suit
made of bear’s fur
with a ten foot "tail" coming out the front
and a brightly colored striped tie and white shirt collar at the neck

if it’s remotely possible, it would be nice to have a pair of black rubber rain boots, eight feet tall

two stone pedestals
each about three feet tall
one with a rooster on top of it
the other with a chicken on top of it

Odysseus, who has been watching all this, goes out and comes back in with
a baby carriage with wire frames on top of it
holding a boulder
and he just leaves it there among the other yard sale items

a tower constructed of household furniture—
little chairs and bedsteads and guitars and socks
and women’s high-heeled shoes
a mannequin
with a basketball head
and two little baseball bats for rabbit ears

And, while everyone is bringing in things for the yard sale,
the groom rolls up his pant leg
puts one naked foot in the air
and paints it ten different messy colors with oil paint.

The garage doors open and one woman is in the garage
standing against the back wall
which is filled with scrawlings,
black line drawings a child might have done of animals
that are lovely but that seem,
accompanied as they are by a lone woman in the garage,
a little sad and desperate.

This could be the bride.

She sings a lonely solo: A Crazy Girl Is Hard to Find
a lonely solo
a lonely solo
a lonely solo
a lonely solo
a lonely solo
a lonely solo

I’m sorry you’re so crazy
I’m sorry you’re so blue
I’m sorry that this sad old song’s for you
Just when we had a good thing going
You had to go and lose your mind
Sane girls are so easy

But a crazy girl's hard to find

You see rabbits in the mirror
And you cry at puppet shows
You laugh at me when I take off my clothes

But underneath the dusty covers
Your madness almost shines
Well those sane girls, they come so easy

But a crazy girl's hard to find

Just when I think I got ya figured
You leave me way behind
Just when I think I see your shadow
I see it's only mine

So you can see why I get nervous
When you say you're gonna go
'Cause you could leave forever and never know
So stay here in this mad house
We'll lose it together this time
Well those sane girls, they're so easy

But a crazy girl's hard to find
Yeah, those sane girls, they come so easy

But a crazy girl's hard to find.

[This singing is joined by
a girl dancing with the computer held to her ear.
—or is this where you get a couple dancing romantically together?]
And now everyone joins in the chorus of the song, or else they sing another song altogether (with even Odysseus 2.0 joining in half-way through).

the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings
the chorus sings

As they sing, individuals will keep leaving the group to bring in a piece of art for the yard sale. And, after they bring in their piece, they rejoin the chorus.

Among the objects are:

a christmas tree
with fork feet holding it up
and decorated with large silver fish
a section of ruined roman column
but coated in gold leaf
like the ruined fortunes of today and yesterday

a skeleton's skull
five feet tall
with an upside nose in the shape of a heart, painted red
and deep black curving lines defining various parts of his skull

five people covered in white sheets,
with only their arms showing to gesticulate,
enter and gesticulate in time to the music
before finally shedding the sheets

A kid's toy piano is brought out and put down.
A guy looks at it,
then turns his back to the piano,
and, squatting, sits on the keyboard,
and then "plays" the piano
by bouncing up and down on his butt.
Is this Odysseus 2.0?

When the choral song ends,
we transition to a medley pure music
which can get increasingly celebratory and raucous.

a guy crosses the stage
with a skeleton on his back
its hands and arms over the shoulders of the guy carrying him
so the guy can hold the skeleton's forearms to keep it on his back

a naked body of christ
holes are poked in it
and blood gushes out

The violinist gets his violin out of the wooden bin by the garage
plays it a little bit [we can't hear it over all the noise]
and then puts it back into the bin
and stomps it again.
A solo dancer comes in
takes the floor lamp with the underpants lampshade
lovingly in her arms,
dances around with it,
dances around with it sweetly,
nostalgically,
spiritedly,
warmly,
regretfully,
and finally
sets it down among the other yard sale items.

and is joined by others
with solos
with chairs
wheelchairs
the salad fork dance

three men do a chair dance together now
dancing on off and around sofa

taking clothes from the clothes rack

odysseus 2.0 dances with a skateboard

everyone dances holding two high heeled shoes in their hands

they throw themselves to the floor
bounce off a yard sale mattress

some of these things remain solos
some of these things
—like bouncing off the mattress—
are things everyone does

there is a bucket dance
and a guy with his feet nailed to floor
(well, with shoes nailed to the floor that he slips into)
rocks back and forth

everyone has a guitar or violin or flute and plays it badly together

someone emerges from a dresser

someone else emerges from a refrigerator

both the bride and groom are part of all this
maybe they are the only ones who dance with each other

And finally the music has segued
into a big, loud wonderful party dance.

And everyone (including Odysseus 2.0) takes part in the big dance.
big party, big dance
big party, big dance
big party, big dance
big party, big dance
And everyone, finally, in the end,
imitates the bride and groom
and all give up their objects and dance with each other
or have their objects dance with each other
so you get a variety of relationships
some couples
some coupled objects
some do objects and then each other and then objects again
some go from one to another

and Odysseus dances with Nan.

And then, in a while,
the music comes to an end,
and everyone is once again sitting around quietly,
a number of them sitting in the garage again.

And, after a silence, the groom speaks to the bride:

THE GROOM
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.

THE BRIDE
You could do that.

THE GROOM
And take you to the south of France
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?

THE BRIDE
Yes.

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

THE GROOM
Well, yes!

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

THE GROOM
The lightbulbs with wings?

THE BRIDE
Yes.

Or
I could be a bed filled with butterflies.

THE GROOM
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.
THE BRIDE
I could be a yellow haystack in a field for you.

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

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

EDITH
I could be a boutique of antique corsets.

JUNE
I could be winged victory.

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

HORNER
I’d like to walk with you across the landscape filled with windmills.

JUNE
We could play beachball.

HORNER
I would say probably
the beach
and sitting in a café in Paris
those would be a couple of my favorite things
and then spending some time in an old farmhouse
in Umbria
overlooking the vineyards and the olive trees
eating all our meals in the big kitchen
where the Italians always have the big table
and hearing the neighbors over in the next orchard
having a shouting argument over their wine with dinner

EDITH
I think of Madame Renoir
sitting on a flowery couch
reading a book.

STEVE
I think of labyrinths of green hedges.

GEORGE
And a naked woman standing on a box
having her picture painted.

EDITH
At Roubaix one time
I saw clowns jump upside down
and there was a cow in the show
a calf maybe
more like a calf
that could jump upside down, too,
just like the clowns.

STEVE
Did you ever have a peacock?

EDITH
No.

STEVE
I’d like to get a peacock for you.

EDITH
I’d like that.
GEORGE
We count ourselves very lucky
not to be in the middle of a shipwreck
a lot of naked bodies on the rocks,
the ship half sunk offshore
half the crew dead
people fighting on the rocks
a war going on out at sea.

STEVE
Right.

JUNE
Sometimes I wonder what you would think of me
if I were an older woman
who kept a naked young woman with me all the time
in the living room
and a little silver fox
and one of those big sad dogs
the skinny kind
who always have their ears laid back on their heads
because they are shy
and the young naked woman
would have two pet baby zebras.

HORNER
What I would think.

JUNE
Yes.

HORNER
Right.

JUNE
Would it be better if you were the kind of guy
who lived down that old narrow wooden staircase
in that little back street
with six potted plants at the top of the stairs
and down the stairs
that old ruined wooden carving in relief
of a young man on horseback
and then
just in front of the door to the basement where you lived
that incredibly skinny ten foot tall naked woman made of plaster?

GEORGE
Where people live says a lot about them.

HAROLD
Eventually
it's where they come from.

HORNER
Right.

NAN
Would you run over a hilltop
that was full of thrown away old electronic equipment
and beautiful red flowers?

HORNER
No.

NAN
Because?

HORNER
I wouldn't want to step on the flowers by mistake.

NAN
Right.

THE BRIDE
If you had a red and white checked table cloth
and a Quiche Lorraine and some fresh fruit
and a bottle of good wine for a picnic outdoors
overlooking, say, the old walled city of Avignon, would you let a red bird have a few bits of your Quiche if he was polite about it?

THE GROOM
Sure.

THE BRIDE
If you had a little tiny sail boat with a little tiny house-like cabin on it just big enough for the two of us with room for an easel in the stern of the boat would you become a painter?

THE GROOM
Yes, I'm afraid I would. If you had a flute and you had on your white summer outfit but I was naked in the woods would you ignore the other naked people in the woods and play your flute for me?

THE BRIDE
Yes. I would.

STEVE
If we had a vineyard would you keep a fifty foot bronze rabbit in the vineyard?

GEORGE
Yes.

STEVE
If I had a white pig I would cover him with tattoos.
NAN
Do you like to have some big garden hose shaped pieces of candy coming out from under the cushions of the living room chaise?

STEVE
Yes.

JUNE
Sometimes I wish your cheeks were made of peaches and your chin would be a pear and you would have cherries in your hair. Your nose would be a cucumber. And your lips would be grapes.

HORNER
Grapes.

JUNE
Green grapes.

THE GROOM
Someday I’d like to take a nap in the woods with you in the middle of the afternoon with the sun coming down through the trees and the cows wading through the little pond but staying in the pond not wanting to come up into the little nook where we are napping just stay in the pond and have a little drink of water and look at the trees on the other side of the pond.

[Music.

A big final song.
The singers all begin singing wherever they happen to be, but, as the song goes on, they gradually join their friends in the garage to sing the final chorus of Monteverdi, all of them, finally, facing front:

Vanne, Orfeo, felice e pieno a goder celeste onore, là 've ben non vien mai meno, là 've mai non fu dolore, mentr'altari, incensi e voti noi t'offriam lieti e devoti.

Così va chi non s'arretra al chiamar di nume eterno, così grazia in ciel impetra chi qua giù provò l'inferno, e chi semina fra doglie d'ogni grazia il frutto coglie.

Large branches filled with autumn leaves now descend from the flies.

Nan, meanwhile, has picked up a dish towel, and she goes up the front steps to the front door, turns, shakes out the dish towel, and turns back and goes inside the house.

(John has followed her—after picking up two cups and two spoons from the yard sale tables—opens the door for her, and follows her inside.)
Odysseus 2.0 is left alone in the yard.
He takes hold of the handle of his suitcase on wheels.
He looks around.
He takes one more,
carefully chosen,
item from the yard sale.

Odysseus leaves

and the singers
sing the last of the Monteverdi

as the garage doors come down

and the stage goes to darkness.

THE END

THE MONTEVERDI LYRICS IN ENGLISH

The first Monteverdi song in translation:

From my beloved Permessus I come to you,
illustrious heroes, noble scions of kings,
whose glorious deeds Fame relates,
though falling short of the truth, since the target is too high.

I am Music, who in sweet accents
can calm each troubled heart,
and now with noble anger, now with love,
can kindle the most frigid minds.

Singing to a golden lyre, I am wont
sometimes to charm mortal ears;
and in this way inspire souls with a longing
for the sonorous harmony of heaven's lyre.
Hence desire spurs me to tell you of Orpheus,
the immortal glory of Pindus and Helicon,
Orpheus who drew wild beasts to him by his singing,
and who subjugated Hades by his entreaties.

Now while I alternate my songs, now happy, now sad,
let no small bird stir among these trees,
no noisy wave be heard on these river banks,
and let each little breeze halt in its course.]

The second Monteverdi song in translation:

On this happy and auspicious day
which has put an end to the amorous torments
of our demigod, let us sing, shepherds,
in such sweet accents
that our strains shall be worthy of Orpheus.
Today fair Eurydice's heart,
formerly so disdainful,
has been touched with compassion;
today Orpheus has been made happy
in the bosom of her for whom he once
sighed and wept so much amongst these woods.

Therefore, on so happy and auspicious a day
which has put an end etc.

CHORUS of NYMPHS & SHEPHERDS
Come, Hymen, ah come,
and let your fiery torch
be like a rising sun
to bring these lovers peaceful days
and henceforth banish afar
the horrors and shadows of anguish and grief.
NYMPH
Ye Muses, the honour of Parnassus, beloved by heaven,
tender consolation to the dejected heart,
let your harmonious lyres
rend the dark veil from every cloud;
and while we today,
on well tuned strings,
invoke Hymen's favour on our Orpheus,
let your singing accord with our playing.

CHORUS of NYMPHS & SHEPHERDS
Leave the mountains,
leave the fountains,
charming, happy nymphs,
and in these meadows
rejoice your fair feet
with your accustomed dances.

Here let the sun behold
your roundelays,
lovelier far than those
which the stars in heaven
dance to the moon
in the darkness of night.

The third Monteverdi song in translation:

CHORUS of NYMPHS & SHEPHERDS
Leave the mountains,
leave the fountains,
charming, happy nymphs,
and in these meadows
rejoice your fair feet
with your accustomed dances.

Here let the sun behold
your roundelays,
lovelier far than those
which the stars in heaven
dance to the moon
in the darkness of night.

Come, Hymen, ah come,
and let your fiery torch
be like a rising sun
to bring these lovers peaceful days
and henceforth banish afar
the horrors and shadows of anguish and grief.

The final Monteverdi song in translation:

CHORUS of NYMPHS & SHEPHERDS
Orpheus' cup of joy is filled,
he is ris'n to realms supernal,
there are pain and sorrow stilled,
there is peace and bliss eternal.
Joyous hearts and altars smoking
offer we, thy grace invoking.

Thus to all of us is given
who obey the Lord Eternal,
he shall taste the joys of Heaven,
who on earth has brav'd th' infernal.
He who sows his seed in sorrow
fruits of grace hall reap tomorrow.
A NOTE ON CASTING
In order to have a nice crowd of singers, the script calls for 12 actors, but the piece can easily be done with ten actors if Steve doubles as Horner, and George doubles as the Astronaut. In that case, too, the bride and groom can start out in the garage crowd from the very top of the piece and then emerge from the crowd for their first scene.

Odysseus 2.0
Nan
The Bride
The Groom
June
Steve (CAN DOUBLE AS HORNER)
Edith
George (CAN DOUBLE AS ASTRONAUT)
John
Harold
Astronaut
Horner

ANOTHER NOTE:
Some of the texts for this piece are taken from Sir John Mandeville's Travels and Jack Kerouac's On the Road.

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