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# Utopia

by CHARLES L. MEE

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An outdoor cafe with several tables.

The cast needs to include at least three immigrants:  
one Asian, one African, and one other.

There will be someone who is very poor, someone very elderly,  
someone with some sort of physical disability,  
a lesbian couple, a gay couple, a hetero couple.

A mother and her nine-year-old daughter enter.  
(If this makes casting too difficult, the daughter can be a teen-ager.)  
The mother carries a croissant and a cup of coffee.  
The daughter carries a croissant and a glass of orange juice.

Over the next hour or so,  
the mother and daughter will occasionally say something to one another,  
but mostly they will just sit  
looking at everyone else in the cafe  
and listening to all they have to say.

THE DAUGHTER, TILLY  
What are we doing here?

THE MOTHER, EDNA  
Making a life.

TILLY

Making a life?

Out of croissants?

EDNA

And jam.

[She hands the jam to Tilly.]

TILLY

Oh.

Thanks, mom.

[A couple enters,  
both with a cup of coffee in hand,  
and sit at a nearby table.]

JENNIFER

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.

BOB

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

This is my chance.

JENNIFER

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.

[The waiter enters.]

WAITER

You all have everything you need?

Everything you want?

Just let me know if there's anything I can get for you.

You know, I like to be useful.

I mean: I don't need to be famous or anything

I don't need to be rich.

I just like to be living on earth.

BOB

We're fine, thank you.

[Another couple enters  
two women with their coffee or tea in hand,  
and go to an empty table and sit.]

WAITER

Ah, you both have what you need?

EVIE

Yes, thanks.

WAITER

OK, I'll leave you all alone.

I'll let you have your time.

But let me know if there's anything you want.

HARRIET

I've been thinking of us being together

and what I thought was

the mental picture that came to mind was

I was in Dean and DeLuca  
and you came in and led me to the bathroom.

[THE WAITER HESITATES,  
THEN DOESN'T LEAVE,  
BUT STAYS TO HEAR THE CONVERSATION]

You sat me down on the toilet and told me 10 punchlines  
and told me to come up with the jokes that went with them.  
And I matched them up correctly  
and then you listed some homeopathic remedies  
where you said the herbal remedy  
and I had to say what it cured.

And then I ran through the back wall into the garden  
where some friends were having a lingerie dinner party.

Everyone was dressed in long silk gowns.

The tables were covered with silk pajamas and robes sewn together.

And then it started raining  
and everyone ran around grabbing the silk and disappearing.  
So I ran for the elevator  
but when the doors closed, we saw the elevator rolling away  
and we were on an Amish school bus.  
All of the kids and teachers were smiling at us and clapping.

The driver let me off at the elephant trainer's  
and he said he would take me back on his elephant.

So I climbed up on his back  
and he started walking  
and just a few steps down the road  
he turned his head around and wrapped his trunk around my waist  
and said that he had fallen in love with me  
and he wouldn't ever let go.

What do you think that means?

EVIE

What things mean.

What things mean.

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.

HARRIET

Right.

EVIE

To me if I wanted to have a happy life, I would just want to have a life with you.

HARRIET

What do you mean? If you wanted a happy life. You mean you don't want a happy life?

EVIE

I do want a happy life. Yes, I do. Would you live your life with me?

HARRIET

Yes. I would love to. I love you.

EVIE

I love you.

HARRIET

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

EVIE

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.

HARRIET

I want to live with you forever.

JENNIFER [speaking to BOB]

I know how I feel. This is how I feel.

BOB

And this is how I feel, too.

JENNIFER

And you can count on it forever you can depend on it so it will bring you total peace.

HARRIET

Could we be considered a couple? And tell people when we introduce ourselves that we are a couple?

EVIE

It could be.

Or not. If you prefer not.

HARRIET

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.

EVIE

This is a feeling we like.

HARRIET

Nothing better.

BOB

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

JENNIFER

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.

HARRIET

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.

We're the lucky ones.

This is how it should be for everyone.

EVIE

For everyone, right

HARRIET

Then you know you have a happy life in a good world.

EVIE

Right.

HARRIET

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

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.

[AND NOW  
EVERYONE IS DISTRACTED  
BECAUSE A GUY COMES THROUGH  
FROM ONE SIDE TO THE OTHER,  
WALKING A DOG.

AND THEN,  
AFTER THE GUY AND THE DOG ARE GONE  
ANOTHER GUY RIDES A BICYCLE FROM ONE SIDE TO THE OTHER.

AND THEN,  
AFTER THE BICYCLE RIDER IS GONE  
THE FIRST GUY, STANDING ON A KAYAK THAT IS ON WHEELS,  
PADDLES HIMSELF IN ONE SIDE  
AND ACROSS THE STAGE AND OUT THE OTHER SIDE

THE SECOND GUY,  
NOW A HEADLESS ACCORDIAN PLAYER,  
[THAT IS, HIS JACKET AND SHIRT AND TIE COVER HIS HEAD]  
ENTERS  
AND STARTS PLAYING  
AND MUSIC SWELLS UP BEHIND HIM  
AND HE PLAYS ALONG WITH THAT MUSIC



AND THEN THE FIRST GUY  
WITH A BIRD FOR A HEAD  
ENTERS  
LOOKS AROUND AT EVERYONE WHO IS THERE  
AND BEGINS DANCING TO THE MUSIC  
AND THEN  
A WOMAN IN A RED DRESS ENTERS TO THE MUSIC  
AND DANCES WITH A FLOOR LAMP IN HER ARMS  
AND THE FLOOR LAMP  
HAS A LAMPSHADE MADE OF UNDERPANTS

AND THE BIRDHEAD AND ACCORDIONIST  
WANDER OUT AS SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES  
SHE DANCES

AND AFTER SHE FINISHES HER DANCE  
SHE TURNS AND WALKS OUT  
ED AND HERBERT [WHO DOUBLED A MOMENT AGO  
AS BIRDHEAD AND ACCORDIONIST]  
ENTER WITH SNACKS AND COFFEE  
AND SIT AT A TABLE

EDMUND  
I think you are lying to me, Herbert.  
You are always lying to me  
because you wish something would be true  
but it isn't.

You are a weak spineless person, Herbert,  
feckless, feeble and ineffective.

But I love you like a cicada.

HERBERT

A cicada?

EDMUND

Yes.

HERBERT

Like a grasshopper you mean?

EDMUND

Do you know what a cicada is?

HERBERT

I thought I did.

EDMUND

There was a time long ago, in prehistoric times  
when cicadas were human beings  
back before the Muses were born.  
And then when the Muses were born  
and song came into being  
some of these human creatures were so taken by the pleasure of it  
that they sang and sang and sang.  
And they forgot to eat or drink  
they just sang and sang  
and so,  
before they knew it,  
they died.

And from those human creatures a new species came into being  
the cicadas  
and they were given this special gift from the Muses:  
that from the time they are born  
they need no nourishment  
they just sing continuously

caught forever in the pleasure of the moment  
without eating or drinking  
until they die.

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

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

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

HARRIET

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

EVIE

Things happen so suddenly sometimes.

HARRIET

Do you believe in love at first sight?

EVIE

No.

HARRIET

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

EVIE

Right.

HARRIET

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

EVIE

you know damn well you're not going to find the perfect mate someone you always agree with or even like

HARRIET

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

EVIE

a human being

HARRIET

another human being

EVIE

because we are lonely people

HARRIET

we like a little companionship

EVIE

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

HARRIET

you don't need a lot

EVIE

you'd settle for very little

HARRIET

very very little when it comes down to it

EVIE

very little and that would feel good

HARRIET

a little hello, good morning, how are you today

EVIE

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

HARRIET

can I bring you anything?

EVIE

a sandwich in a bag?

HARRIET

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

EVIE

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.

HARRIET

and after that nap or godknows what'll

EVIE

and to bed

HARRIET

you don't even have to touch each other

EVIE

you don't have to be Don Juan have some perfect technique

HARRIET

just a touch, simple as that

EVIE

an intimate touch?

HARRIET

Fne. Nice. So much the better.

EVIE

that's all: just a touch that feels good

HARRIET

OK, goodnight, that's all

EVIE

I'd go for that.

HARRIET

I'd like that.

EVIE

I'd like that just fine

HARRIET

I'd call that a happy life

EVIE

as happy as it needs to get for me

JENNIFER

You know I like to cook

BOB

Oh

JENNIFER

And I like to make apricot confiture

BOB

Wow

JENNIFER

And I straighten up  
but not right away  
and usually I live in a mess

but then I straighten up later on  
only it's not always straightened up.

BOB  
Right.

JENNIFER  
I do dishes, and I do laundry,  
but I'm not good at really cleaning.

BOB  
Unh-hunh.

JENNIFER  
So that's how it is if you live with me  
that's how it will be  
that's all.  
I just wanted, if we're going to be together, you know,  
for everything to be clear.

BOB  
Right.

JENNIFER  
So you understand about laundry and dishes  
and not straightening up  
and there are no surprises  
like you're not suddenly going to discover  
oh, she doesn't straighten up  
this will never work out  
because I can't stand a mess  
I'm sorry I wish I could  
I wish I could just rise above it  
but chaos makes me crazy  
I just fall apart  
and I can't go on living with you.

BOB  
Like that.

JENNIFER

Right. That's not how it is for me.  
Because, moving in with you,  
this is a big deal for me,  
and I don't want there to be any misunderstandings  
because this is a big move for me  
and I don't think  
after I do this  
that there will be any going back  
I mean, if a year from now you were to say  
oh, you never straighten up  
I don't think I can live with that  
the point is  
I think I'd shoot you.

BOB

Right.

JENNIFER

That's how it is for me.

BOB

That's it?

JENNIFER

Yes.

BOB

That's all.

JENNIFER

Yes. I don't think there's anything else. I think that's everything.

BOB

The truth is  
I can do the laundry, too, and I do dishes.



JENNIFER

Oh.

BOB

So, I think everything's going to be OK.

JENNIFER

Oh. Good. Good. That's good then.

BOB

Right.

Plus, I cook, too.

JENNIFER

You cook, too.

BOB

Right.

JENNIFER

Oh.

BOB

Plus, I love you like crazy.

JENNIFER

Oh,

you do.

Oh, good.

Good.

That's good then.

I can accept that.

HERBERT

I love you, Edmund,

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.

EDMUND

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.

HERBERT  
Why didn't you say so?

EDMUND  
I'm a shy person.  
Why didn't you?

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

EDMUND  
Oh. Right.

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

EDMUND  
You did?

HERBERT  
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.

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

HERBERT  
Right.

EDMUND  
And kiss me.

HERBERT  
Right.

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

THE WAITER BRINGS IN AN ENORMOUS AMAZING  
GORGEOUSLY DECORATED CAKE  
THAT MAY REQUIRE A CART TO BRING IT IN

EVERYONE LOOKS AT THE CAKE

AND THEN HERBERT GETS UP AND GOES OUT

AND BRINGS BACK IN  
A PERFECT RECTANGLE MADE OF CRUSHED BEER CANS  
EVERYONE LOOKS AT THAT  
AND THEN EVIE GOES OUT  
AND BRINGS IN  
A VAST ASSEMBLAGE OF GIANT RED LIPS  
EVERYONE LOOKS AT THAT  
AND THEN HARRIET GOES OUT  
AND BRINGS IN  
A DRESS MANNEQUIN ON A STAND WITH WHEELS AND HANGING FROM THE  
SIDES A PITCHFORK AND A BIG CANE HARVESTING KNIFE.  
HERBERT GOES OUT AND BRINGS IN  
A WHITE PIG COVERED IN TATTOOS  
AND A 5 FOOT TALL UPRIGHT SILVER THUMB  
JENNIFER GOES OUT AND BRINGS IN  
A BOX OF MISCELLANEOUS WOMEN'S HIGH HEELED SHOES WITH A GLASS  
FRONT ON THE BOX.  
EVIE BRINGS IN TWO DOZEN FABULOUS SOCKS  
BOB BRINGS IN 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  
AND OTHERS MAY BRING IN A DOZEN OTHER THINGS ASSEMBLED FROM THE  
THEATRE'S PROP ROOM AND OLD COSTUMES  
[ALL THESE ITEMS ARE SUGGESTIONS TO GIVE AN IDEA OF WHAT IS TO BE  
DONE HERE, BUT ALL THE OBJECTS CAN BE DIFFERENT THAN WHAT IS  
NAMED.]  
AND THEN  
FINALLY  
THE WAITER BRINGS IN A TREE STUMP  
PAINTED ALL THE COLORS OF THE RAINBOW  
AND GIVES IT TO TILLY, THE DAUGHTER

WAITER  
This is for you.  
TILLY  
Oh. Thank you!  
Thank you!

WAITER [to the daughter]  
You know, we have some ice cream, too.

Would you like a little ice cream?

DAUGHTER

Oh!

Yes.

MOTHER

One scoop.

WAITER

One scoop?

DAUGHTER

Thank you.

WAITER

And do you have a favorite flavor?

DAUGHTER

I have a lot of favorite flavors.

I mean

Vanilla

you know.

And chocolate.

Or butter pecan.

Strawberry.

And I like

Almond Crunch

Or Coffee Or Coffee Mocha Fudge

[she laughs]

And Coconut Chip Alumni Swirl

And Apple Cobbler Crunch

Or Arboretum Breeze Bananas Foster

Black Cow

Beet fantasia

[And, if she can't remember all these ice cream flavors,  
she can make up some of her own.]

Booger Banana

Caramel Critters

Cotton Candy  
Canned pea souffle  
Crunchy gravel  
Or I could have Dulce De Leche or Earwax Appeal or Escargot Ecstasy  
Fresh mowed dandelion with grass clippings  
Goo Goo Cluster  
Happy Happy Joy Joy  
Infidel Fried Chicken  
I Scream Ice Cream  
Keeney Beany  
Chocolate Kitty Litter crunch  
Lichen candy  
Lemon Slime Monster Mash  
Mossnificent Ravishing radish Rutabaga-turnip-parsnip Crunch Squash sherbet  
Tofu custard  
Toad-drool Termite Crumble Orange  
Shitbert Seymour's Hickory Smoked Semen Rocky Roadkill Micecream Supreme  
Vomit Comet  
Excrement Hemp Hemp Hooray Nitrous Oxide Tempered Fiberglass Pink Insulation  
Sensation.

Do you have any of those?

WAITER

Well, we have vanilla.

Just kidding.

We have vanilla and chocolate and strawberry  
and Cotton Candy  
and Keeney Beany Chocolate.

DAUGHTER

Oh. Thank you.

I'd have the Keeney Beany Chocolate.

WAITER

Good choice. Coming right up.

[he leaves]

## MOTHER

I like dingleberries.

It's like the poet Joe Brainard said:

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

I remember many Sunday afternoon dinners of fried chicken or pot roast.  
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 my father's collection of arrow heads.  
I remember loafers with pennies in them.  
I remember game rooms in basements.  
I remember "come as you are" parties. And everybody cheated.  
I remember drugstore counter stools with no backs, and swirling around and  
around on them.  
I remember two-dollar bills. And silver dollars.  
I remember "Double Bubble" gum comics and licking off the sweet "powder."  
I remember catching myself with an expression on my face that doesn't relate to  
what's going on anymore.  
I remember the little "thuds" of bugs bumping up against the screens at night.  
I remember the only time I ever saw my mother cry. I was eating apricot pie.  
I remember an American history teacher who was always threatening to jump out  
the window if we didn't quiet down  
I remember ponytails.  
I remember potato salad.  
I remember salt on watermelon.  
I remember lightning.  
I remember my father in a tutu. As a ballerina dancer in a variety show at church.  
I remember chalk.  
I remember that life was just as serious then as it is now.  
I remember that for my fifth birthday  
all I wanted was an off-one-shoulder black satin evening gown.  
And 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 picnics.

HARRIET

I don't know.

I love to think about  
birds' nests from China  
and about prisms

EVIE

a sitar

HARRIET

or a stone taken from a vulture's head;

EVIE

jasmine

HARRIET

narcissus

EVIE

scarlet ribbons

JENNIFER

a toothpick case

EVIE

an eyebrow brush

HARRIET

a pair of French scissors

JENNIFER

a quart of orange flower water

BOB

a tweezer case—  
an amber-headed cane

HERBERT

lessons for the flute

BOB

an almanac for the year 1700

EDMUND

petrified moss  
petrified wood

HERBERT

Brazil pebbles

HARRIET

Egyptian bloodstones

JENNIFER

hummingbirds

BOB

a piece of the stone of the oracle of Apollo

HERBERT

Bucharest salami

HARRIET

a Turkish powder horn

BOB

a pistol  
a giant's head

JENNIFER

a music box  
a quill pen

a red umbrella  
some faded thing

EDMUND  
handkerchiefs made of lawn

HERBERT  
of cambric  
of Irish linen  
of Chinese silk.

JENNIFER  
I wish they'd go on forever.

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

EVIE  
or in a meadow

HARRIET  
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

EVIE  
silk stockings of the colors of the orient

HARRIET  
shoes of Spanish leather  
rolls of parchment

EVIE  
a bundle of tobacco

HARRIET

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.

HERBERT

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.

JENNIFER

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.

WAITER

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.

ANY OTHER MONOLOGUE?  
CHOSEN BY THE ACTORS AND DIRECTOR  
FROM THE ATTACHED TEXTS  
OR FROM OTHER TEXTS THEY BRING IN

AND NOW PEOPLE GO OUT  
AND COME BACK IN WEARING WILD COSTUMES  
TAKING UP A STANCE HERE OR THERE TO SHOW OFF  
AND THEN, WHEN SOMEONE ELSE ENTERS,  
AND SOMEONE ELSE,  
LEAVING  
AND THEN COMING BACK IN LATER IN ANOTHER OUTFIT

PEOPLE CAN LOOK LIKE SOME OR ALL OF THE IMAGES BELOW,  
OR LIKE SOMETHING ELSE IN A SIMILAR SPIRIT:  
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;

A WOMAN WHO IS ONE IMMENSE PIECE OF STANDING CANDLE WAX WITH A HALF DOZEN TINY LIT CANDLES WHERE HER HEAD SHOULD BE;  
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.

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 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.

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

AND A SOLO GUY COMES OUT

ROLLS UP HIS PANT LEG

LIES DOWN ON THE FLOOR ON HIS BACK

PUTS ONE NAKED FOOT IN THE AIR

AND PAINTS IT TEN DIFFERENT MESSY COLORS WITH OIL PAINT

A WOMAN, HER FACE PAINTED WITH BLOTCHES OF CRIMSON AND GREEN AND BLUE

A GUY WEARING A GARBAGE CAN UPSIDE DOWN

SO HIS HEAD IS A YELLOW GLASS BOWL

IN A HOLE IN THE BOTTOM OF THE GARBAGE CAN

HIS SHINS AND FEET CAN BE SEEN AT BOTTOM

HIS ARMS COME OUT THE SIDE AND HOLD CRUTCHES OR CANES

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

A NAKED GUY, PAINTED RED, WITH A WHITE FACE, RED LIPS BLACK ALL



AROUND THE EYES RED AND BLACK STREAKS ON HIS FACE  
A GUY WITH A CUBIST FACE AND BODY THE STEEL HEAD OF A BULLDOG  
RUSTED AND BLACK AND BROWN  
A GUY WHO HAS A HUGE EYEBALL FOR A HEAD

THERE IS A PARADE OF BEAUTIFUL DRESSES  
WORN BY BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

A WOMAN ENTERS WITH HER COMPUTER HELD CLOSE TO HER HEAD  
LISTENING TO THE MUSIC THAT COMES TO HER FROM HER COMPUTER AND  
DANCING  
AND EVERYONE WATCHES HER  
UNTIL HER DANCING COMES TO AN END  
AND THEN SHE LOOKS AROUND AT EVERYONE

SEVERAL MORE DIALOGUES AND MONOLOGUES HERE  
CHOSEN BY THE ACTORS AND DIRECTOR  
FROM THE ATTACHED TEXTS  
OR FROM OTHER TEXTS THEY BRING IN

JENNIFER

When you come to the end of your life I don't know that you're going to care about much of anything except did you love someone did someone love you how was it being together what was better than sitting in a café in the late morning or after lunch talking about nothing much gossiping about Martha maybe a little time together in the afternoon in bed or even just thinking about it making a plan for the following afternoon dinner a concert things you think: this is a boring, conventional, routine life but so filled with pleasure it's unique the two of you this concoction of different histories tastes, impulses, neurons, memories brought together in complete delight for a millisecond on earth and then gone forever and then if you have children the pleasure in their joy in their company in the paths they take to places you've never gone and never would have imagined and then, too, some good friends of course they might enrage you from time to time tedious, annoying, but they're the universe you live in you may enjoy the idea of the planets even though you never see them you may enjoy the ocean and the Grand Canyon of course you will if you see it

But I think when you come to the end of your life I don't know that you're going to

care about about much of anything except did you love someone did someone love you how was it being together.

You think life is a causes b causes c causes d and it all takes place pretty much in the same place even just in the living room and over a straight span of time but really a causes b causes Phoenix causes 327 causes purple causes a song and dance causes a volcano eruption causes seeing your old high school friend again after all these years seeing your old friend in Afghanistan that's how our lives really are

AND THEN SUDDENLY

MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC  
MUSIC

EVERYONE DANCES

AND DANCES

AND

DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES  
DANCES

AND THE DANCING SHOULD GO ON FOR FIFTEEN OR TWENTY MINUTES

WILD AND CRAZY

PEOPLE FALLING TO THE FLOOR

AND THROWING THEMSELVES TO THE FLOOR

AND GETTING UP AGAIN AND DANCING

DANCING

FALLING

A PARTNER PICK-UP BY THE LIPS, KISSING

OTHERS SEE IT

SO THEY IMITATE

AND IT HAPPENS A BUNCH

AND THEN

ONE BY ONE

OR COUPLE BY COUPLE

THEY ALL SIT DOWN AGAIN AT THEIR TABLES

AND DRINK THEIR COFFEE AND TEA

AND THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

LOOK QUIETLY AT ONE ANOTHER

AND FINALLY THE DAUGHTER SPEAKS

DAUGHTER

What do I make of that?

MOTHER

You make a life of that.

DAUGHTER

Ok.

Good.

I like that.

THE END

SOME OTHER TEXTS THAT THE CAST AND DIRECTOR  
MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT  
CHOOSE TO USE

SOMEONE (taking time with this)

There was a girl in Paris one time, more than a hundred years ago. [silence]

Do you know this story?

SOMEONE ELSE (agreeably)

I don't know.

SOMEONE

In 1860 was it?

SOMEONE ELSE

How would I know?

SOMEONE

You might have heard about it.

SOMEONE ELSE

Or 1840.

SOMEONE

I don't remember.

SOMEONE ELSE

It doesn't matter.

SOMEONE

Anyway, there was a young woman in Paris named Herculine Barbinyou, you might have read about her, who lived in a convent school with a few dozen other young schoolgirls, and she discovered that she was, in fact, not a young woman at all but a young man. Or not a young man either, but a young woman and a young man together-in short, a hermaphrodite.

SOMEONE ELSE

Right.

SOMEONE

You might say: what has this to do with me?

SOMEONE ELSE Yes.

SOMEONE

I'm not a French schoolgirl.

I'm not a person of the nineteenth century.

SOMEONE ELSE

Right.

SOMEONE ELSE

What would be wrong with that?

SOMEONE ELSE

Right.

SOMEONE

You could say, I'm not a hermaphrodite.

SOMEONE ELSE

No.

SOMEONE ELSE

What would be wrong with that?

SOMEONE ELSE

Right.

SOMEONE

And yet, this is how these tragedies so often begin.

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 ELSE

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.

JENNIFER

They say birds could sing even before there were human beings on earth. Complicated songs-songs that had complicated ideas, and even thoughts and feelings. Some people say that people learned to sing and dance by watching the birds, so it may be that today we sing thoughts and feelings we don't even understand, but that birds do understand.

ETHYL

I've known an elephant who could draw.



ISABELLA

As far as that goes, for all you know, plants have souls. I mean there's nothing that proves animals are a higher form of life than plants. In fact, I think plants are the highest form of life there is. All plants do is come from a seed and take in the sky and take in the planet earth and grow. That's all they do. That's the most efficient and friendliest form of life there is. You know, plants don't need us; we need plants, but they don't need us.

ETHYL

Well, I can imagine stepping off the earth, stepping out into the constellations, into the clouds of star dust, the comets and cocoon stars-and out there. You might find 100 million planets inhabited by living beings-this is possible-where the plight of a world such as ours, may seem no more significant than the most ordinary little accident of daily life seems with us.

SOMEONE ELSE

People lack a sense of the exquisite.

SOMEONE

I wish I had a sense of the exquisite.

SOMEONE ELSE

For instance, there are some things that you can't compare to anything else. For instance, when you've stopped loving someone, you feel as though the person you love has become someone else completely, even though actually he is still the same person.

SOMEONE

A sense of the uniqueness of things.

SOMEONE ELSE

Or sometimes you look at the branches of the camphor tree, and you see how tangled they are. They make a person feel estranged from the tree in a way and yet it's because the tree is divided into so many branches that sometimes the image of the tree is used to describe people in love.

SOMEONE ELSE Of all human qualities, the greatest is sympathy.

SOMEONE Or compassion.

SOMEONE Or compassion.

SOMEONE ELSE For clouds even.

SOMEONE Or snow.

SOMEONE 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.

SOMEONE ELSE Like the course of a boat across a lake.

SOMEONE Like paradise.

SOMEONE ELSE 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

SOMEONE I love a child eating strawberries.

SOMEONE ELSE An earthen cup.

SOMEONE A new wooden chest.

SOMEONE ELSE A white jacket over a violet vest.

SOMEONE Duck eggs.

SOMEONE ELSE Or beach parsley.

SOMEONE Club moss.

SOMEONE ELSE The pear tree.

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

JENNIFER

I miss postcards.

You know.

Postcards are unique, and no one sends them any more.

It just isn't done. And I often wonder: why not?

BOB

Has someone taken a moral position?

JENNIFER

With a novel or a book you always come to the end,  
but you can just keep reading or writing one postcard after another  
and never come to the end.

Each one of them unique—and never an end.

This is a kind of pleasure we simply don't know any more,  
though it seems harmless enough when you think about it.

There's no point to it, and yet it's such a pleasure.

It's not what you would call goal oriented,

that's the pleasure of it, I suppose,

you just take it for its own sake.

And I like that you can never tell

which is the front and which is the back of a postcard.

And then sometimes when I write letters and put them in an envelope,  
I'll enclose some pressed flowers or some grapes,

but usually I don't write at all

because I can't keep all my sentences in the proper tenses.

And one never worries about that with a postcard.

And then sometimes when I read a book—

which is a more sort of sustained adventure—

I get very involved in the words, but I don't know what's going on.

You'll notice how—when you begin a sentence,

all the words depend on each other.

It's like when you move your arms.

You can't get from here to there without going in between.

And you might take away one word,  
and then everything you say is nonsense.  
This is linguistics in our time,  
and everything depends on it.  
You define something in a certain way;  
you put it in your definition or not,  
and poof there you are:  
you've created your society, really, haven't you?  
And what did Aristotle say?  
Men are social animals  
and women, too:  
we become what we make of ourselves in our relationships.

BOB

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

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.

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