Utopia

by CHARLES L. MEE

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
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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,
feeble, 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
Fine. 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.

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 Ecstacy
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?
CHOOSEN 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 blotsches 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
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EVERYONE DANCES
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34
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.
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.

You could say, I’m not a French schoolgirl.
I’m not a person of the nineteenth century.

You could say, I’m not a hermaphrodite.

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 it’s 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
mythical 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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