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Heaven on Earth

by CHARLES L. MEE

Big chunks of ruin,
chunks of Roman columns and capitals
with vines growing out of them and around them,
shrubs growing on top of them and out their sides

—like the etchings of Piranesi:
the ruins of the Roman Empire,
the world has come to an end—
and yet:
life goes on;
sheep graze amidst the ruins, accompanied by their shepherds,
oblivious to their surroundings,
as though nothing had ever happened.

In this piece, for us, today,
we don't have the shepherds and the sheep on stage
but we do have chunks of Piranesi's ruins of the Roman empire
and also
bits of the Brooklyn Bridge covered with vines and bits of shrub
and other distinctive chunks of ruins
of the buildings of New York City

and also
a mobile home trailer
a red London double-decker bus
a café table and chairs

the backyard plastic pool
a patch of dirt
and trees behind.

Dogs.

Our world, too, has come to an end—
and:
life goes on.

A guy brings out a rattan chair, puts it down to one side, in the dirt,
and just sits in it facing the audience,
smiling.

A few minutes later
a guy comes out of the mobile home
carrying a gas can;
he sits in a chair,
puts the gas can on the ground next to him,
lights a cigarette,
enjoys it,

and a woman comes out and,
sitting in a chair, or seated on the ground,
puts on her stockings;

a woman in a red dress comes out with her floor lamp
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing

dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing

and

there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing

she dances with her floor lamp
and, after a long while, dances out with her floor lamp

and a croquet game goes on:
a ball is hit onto the stage
and, after a moment,
a guy follows along behind it with a croquet mallet;
and then, a moment later,
another guy with a croquet mallet comes out;
and they work their way across the stage and
out the other side

while

a woman comes out and puts down a bowl of Cezanne fruit
and sits down and has a conversation with her two friends
or sits alone and knits;

a baby carriage
is just left in the middle of the stage
or next to a seated woman
or whatever.

For visual inspiration,
see the paintings of the Nabis,
of Edouard Vuillard, Aristide Maillol, Maurice Denis,
Felix Vallotton, Paul Ranson, Pierre Bonnard, Georges Lacombe.

THE MAN WITH THE GAS CAN

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, bullshit
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
you can't avoid being affected by
the economy
international relations
imperial aspirations and xenophobic rages
assholes and bastards and lunatics
raving maniacs
even
—if you are among the dreadfully unlucky—
you may have your life made wretched
or brought to an end by these things
they're not trivial by any means
and still, when your life is brought to an end
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.

and, while he speaks,
some women bring out a string of six simple wood chairs, face front
one sews, two chat, one plays with a child or a dog, one reads a book;

a woman comes out with a green picket fence,
sets it standing up by itself
stands in front of it, to one side, for a minute,
then picks up the fence and leaves;

several naked bathers in the plastic wading pool?
or one naked woman rolled on in a bathtub
sponging herself?
and then, a while later,
someone else comes along and rolls her out?

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

song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song

THE GUY WITH THE GAS CAN AGAIN

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.

is one of the bathers brushing her hair
the other just standing in her corset
the third naked in the water?

does one of the women do laundry in the plastic wading pool?

a guy in a big overcoat to his ankles smoking a cigarette walks through

THE GUY WITH THE GAS CAN

Probably you know about the first emperor of China
who conquered everything
and made a single state
and standardized everything
standardized writing
and standardized coinage
and legal codes and bureaucratic procedures
and patterns of scholarship
and some would say patterns of thought
and the length of axles for wheels
and roadways
and confiscated all the weapons in the whole country
to prevent uprisings
and tore down all the walls that had once defended separate states
and built the Great Wall of China
and then he thought:
I've done everything
there's nothing left to do
I run the whole known world
I've killed all the Confucian scholars who used to criticize me
and burned their books
there's nothing left for me to do
except to become immortal.
And so he searched and searched
and finally he found a pill to make himself immortal
and he took the pill every day
until finally
the pill he took for immortality
became the thing that brought him down and killed him
because

what he didn't know
was that the pill was filled with mercury.

the naked woman (or the naked man) walks through
as another woman in the foreground
picks flowers

the big couch with the oriental coverlet
and the naked woman,
the classic odalisque,
is rolled out onstage-
and she speaks:

ODALISQUE

I don't mind the part where
he doesn't know what he's doing with his life
and he gets up late
and then who knows if he does anything when he goes to the gym
or he just has coffee
but then when he comes home
and all he can think about is going shopping for fabrics
that's when I think what the fuck
I mean let's just get something in cotton
and have done with it
something green
or blue
or silk
I wouldn't mind that
I don't think people want to be lying around on velvet
because if you spill your coffee on that
or you have cookie crumbs—or we could have a quilt
and then he's found this French women's magazine
with this quiz that says who you are
is how you respond to your summer vacation
and then there's a list, I don't get it,
that isn't, like, how you respond to your summer vacation

but

I don't know

this list that gives you five options to check off:

- 1) overworked
- 2) passive
- 3) anxious
- 4) a hedonist
- 5) impossible to satisfy

and he's saying OK

put one of these colors in each of the four squares
arranged in the shape of a cross

violet, blue, green, brown

and then it turns out

if you put brown in the left-most square

it means you are a controlling person

and it seems there are three possibilities

for the kind of person you are:

- 1) an intellectual
- 2) a hedonist

or

- 3) a voluptueuse

and for sure if those are my choices

I'm choosing voluptueuse

and then:

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece

another dance piece
another dance piece

maybe with a

song
song
song
song
song
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song
song
song
song
song

while

a woman planting flowers or tending the grass delicately, blade by blade

an old woman with a cane

woman holding her shirt, otherwise naked,
just holding her shirt, nothing else
lost in thought for a minute?

a pair of children play in the dirt
a woman hangs out laundry
whatever

a woman sitting alone in the woods
with a pedestal table
trees in the background
and a big bird or monkey or frog [a puppet?]
comes up from behind the table to talk with her

a young man and woman in the BG speaking intimately to one another
as a woman in the foreground, picking flowers and holding them in her skirt
turns and watches them

man and woman kiss and kiss and kiss and kiss and kiss
while a man dressed in black, further back in the woods,
turned away, turns back to look at them (sorrow)

The classic farmer and his wife.
Do they stand together, side by side, facing front,
and he holds the pitchfork?

THE FARMER

I love seeds.
So does my wife, Emily.

EMILY

This, in short, is why we are putting out our catalogue
which we call Revolution Seeds.

THE FARMER

Our particular emphasis is on seeds that no one else
(or hardly anyone else)
is offering for sale,

EMILY

seeds that are not available anywhere else.

THE FARMER

These seeds give rise to a marvelous array of vegetables, herbs,
and ornamentals,

EMILY

many of which the average American has never heard of.

THE FARMER

But apart from the intrinsic wonder of these venerable plant varieties from all over the world, my wife and I feel it is really important to preserve, propagate, and popularize them while there is still time.

EMILY

This is where the "revolution" part comes in.

THE FARMER

Whatever your political beliefs might be, and whatever you might think about what our country is doing in the world today (and my wife has very kindly encouraged me not to digress here into a long political rant), the case for a revolution in the way our food is produced, handled, and distributed is very strong. The sugar-coated policies and practices of huge corporations like Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, and Monsanto poison our environment, put small farmers out of business here and everywhere,

EMILY

and work to reduce the human race's rich diversity of food resources and knowhow to a few patented varieties owned and controlled by them, from seed to table.

THE FARMER

Plus, their food tastes like crap.

EMILY

Ordinary people, not corporations, should dictate how food policy is made and implemented, in this country and around the world.

THE FARMER

One way to counteract the corporatization of our food supply is to promote the small-scale, decentralized use of food crops that you are not prohibited by law from saving the seeds out of, food crops with stories and history behind them, food crops that look great and taste GOOD, that are fun and interesting to grow and that promote healthy local communities, both physically and economically.

EMILY

Hopefully our catalogue is a step in this direction.

THE FARMER

Yes, we are selling "weed" seed in our catalogue.

EMILY

The old and crusty among you may see this as a shameless money-making ploy. So may the young and supple.

THE FARMER

We rest our case on the immortal words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said:
"A weed [is] a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered."
We submit that these plants are as good or better than any other plants and that it is mere accident that they, unlike our common garden vegetables, have not had the good fortune to be domesticated and receive the benefit of generations of selection, attention,

EMILY

and breeding.

THE FARMER

As regards invasive weeds, the excellent seedsman J.L. Hudson

(Star Route 2, Box 337, La Honda, California,
94020, www.jlHUDSONseeds.net)
contends that they operate within the same parameters
as any other organism,

EMILY

and therefore things will all even out eventually,
and stability will re-emerge.

THE FARMER

He stresses that this is a natural process,
responsible for all the biodiversity we see in the world today.
My own experience suggests that weeds only invade an area
when its natural balance has somehow been disturbed.
The tiny patches of original prairie
we have remaining in Illinois are, as far as I know,
blithely unconcerned about the buttonweed, pigweed, lambsquarters,
and other bad-ass weeds that often plague
the corn and bean fields around them.

BYSTANDER

You want to say something about the red bus?

ANOTHER BYSTANDER

The red bus?

BYSTANDER

Yeah.

Like:

What's up with that?

Where did that come from?

ANOTHER BYSTANDER

I thought you were here when it got here.

BYSTANDER

No.

ANOTHER BYSTANDER

Well, I don't know.

BYSTANDER

I mean, were there, like, original English settlers here?

ANOTHER BYSTANDER

I don't know.

THE GUY IN THE WHITE APRON
WITH THE BARBECUE SPATULA

[or does this break up into multiple people taking single words or lines?]

What do you love about this?
that anything can happen?
the quickness?
the suddenness?
the spontaneity,
the relaxation of rules
sunshine
openness
eternity
surprise,
lightning strikes, life is reversed,
tragedy reduces it all to rubble
happiness phoenixes up from nowhere
delight and joy
and optimism
along with a feeling of warmth, humanity
tolerance, possibility
the permeability and openness of character
the absolute embrace of life on earth
the sort of french interest in pure pleasure?

ANOTHER BYSTANDER

I'm going to do something—
make something meaningful
like a work of art.

Like: I'm going to write a play.
So there will be some characters
and a plot.

And so now I am answering these questions
about my main character:

1. What interests you most about this character and why?
2. What was their most painful experience as a child?
3. Are there any ways in which you resemble them?
4. What is their action? What do they want more than anything in the world?
5. What are some of the obstacles they'll have to overcome?
6. What setting have you chosen to place them in and why?
7. What sort of time frame are you thinking about and why?
8. What scene can you hardly wait to write and why?
9. What will they be doing 40 years from the time your play begins?
10. How will they feel about the way you portrayed them?

ANOTHER BYSTANDER

When a day passes
it's no longer there.
What remains of it?
Nothing more than a story.
If stories weren't told
or books weren't written,
man would live live the beasts,
only for the day....
Today we live,
but by tomorrow
today will be a story.
The whole world,
all human life,
is one long story.

Music, and a dance
Music, and a dance
Music, and a dance
Music, and a dance
Music, and a dance
Music, and a dance
Music, and a dance

SYLVIA

My husband started the house-decorating.
Every single part of the wall had to be covered.
It didn't matter how much it cost. He never looked at prices.

VOICEOVER

The playroom overflowed with toys,
and everyone's closets were jammed with clothes.

SYLVIA

If I wanted to get something,
if I didn't have enough money,
I put it on a credit card.
If you looked through my closet,
I have things with tags on them I haven't even worn yet.

VOICEOVER

Sylvia says she never thought her family would have money problems...
until Joe's spending spiraled out of control.
Instead of paying the mortgage, Joe bought a motorcycle.

SYLVIA

He just was reckless spending.

VOICEOVER

Eventually, Sylvia lost track of Joe's bills.

SYLVIA

He starting taking the mail away
so I couldn't see what he was spending on.
I was very scared.
I was afraid that we wouldn't be able to pay the mortgage.

VOICEOVER

Sylvia never imagined she would lose more than her home.
After returning from a weekend away with the kids,
she discovered her husband had killed himself in their garage.

The next day, a stunned Sylvia learned
Joe had canceled his \$300,000 life insurance policy three months before.
He had also stopped making all mortgage payments.
Sylvia had only \$72 in her checking account.
With no savings accounts or retirement plans to fall back on,
Sylvia faces \$450,000 in mortgage debt,
\$17,000 in her own credit card debt
and another \$40,000-50,000 owed on Joe's credit cards.

SYLVIA

For 18 years I only took off my makeup right before bed
and put it on first thing in the morning
because my husband always wanted me to look good.

VOICEOVER

Together, Suze and Sylvia remove their makeup.
And Sylvia faces her true self.

With the makeup off,
Suze helps Sylvia realize the full extent of her problems.

SYLVIA

I used to work as a hairdresser but I haven't had a job in 12 years.

VOICEOVER

With Sylvia already behind on her mortgage payments,
Suze breaks down all of her bills.

SUZE

Most women underestimate what it really costs to live day-to-day.

VOICEOVER

Sylvia's new reality is that she needs to start from scratch.

SUZE

Sylvia needs to sell her home and rent a one-bedroom apartment.

VOICEOVER

Suze says Sylvia has only one option-to turn to family and friends.

SUZE

You have to ask for help.
You actually have to yell it from the mountaintop,
'Help me, because I can't help myself right now.'

VOICEOVER

To enlist the help Sylvia needs,
Suze gathers a group of loved ones
and explains the extent of Sylvia's money problems.

SYLVIA

I need someone to babysit my children
while I go on job interviews,
as well as some financial assistance until I'm back on my feet.

VOICEOVER

Immediately, Sylvia's sister-in-law Linda
and her two nieces, Haley and Heather,
offer to watch the kids.

LINDA

I'm available to help her while she goes out and looks for a job,
and I'm also available to help her at least three days out of the week
to watch the kids when they get out of school.

VOICEOVER

Her aunt Ann Marie offers to pitch in some home-cooked meals,
and her sister Cindy and mother, Laura, say they will help
in any way they can.

CINDY

I love you, and you are so strong,
much more than you know.
I will help you with anything I know.
Whether it's teaching you how to use a computer,
you know I'm always there for you.

VOICEOVER

As for taking care of bills,
Suze discourages the family from making loans to Sylvia.
Loans destroy families and friendships
because every time you see her, you'll think,
'When is she going to pay me back?' Suze says.
Instead of making a loan,
Sylvia's brother-in-law Andy says
he will commit to giving her \$1,000 per month.

Family members pledge to help her find a new apartment,
and her uncle Joe promises to co-sign.
Because she won't be able to afford movers,
everyone offers to help move her belongings into her new home.

SYLVIA

Now I feel like I have wings, like everybody's supporting me.

VOICEOVER

Sylvia's five-bedroom house was overflowing
with clothes, knickknacks and toys.
So Suze came up with a plan for her to downsize her belongings
and make some cash-an emergency estate sale.

When the sale was over, Sylvia had made a total of \$13,000!
In addition to the \$13,000 from the sale,
\$2,000 per month from Social Security
and the \$1,000 per month from her brother-in-law Andy
are helping Sylvia to get on her feet.

She's applying for jobs at haircutting salons.

She doesn't care if she has to sweep the floor, Suze says.

And now:
she's an independent person.

She's going to be just fine.

AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
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AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE
AND NOW A BIG DANCE

and then:

the stadium:

a projection of an architect's drawing of a stadium
pen and ink, very fine line

[It could be that
a simple home movie screen
is brought out and set up
or it could be an HDTV screen that is rolled out
with two guys,
one on each side
who have rolled the HDTV out,
they stand there
and a NASCAR race is projected on the screen
with the noise of cars and the crowd cheering]

cheering football crowd
and then a politician delivering a rousing speech to the crowd-
but in greek:

Προμηθέα, την ασύντυχη
μοίρ' αυτή σου θρηνώ
κι απ' τα μάτια μου αβάοτηγο
βρύση τρέχει
και την όψη μου βρέχει δάκρυ θερμό.
Γιατ' ο Δίας με νόμους δικούς του σκληρά
κι άθεα αυτά κυβερνά
μοίρ' αυτή σου θρηνώ
κι απ' τα μάτια μου αβάοτηγο
βρύση τρέχει
και την όψη μου βρέχει δάκρυ θερμό.
Γιατ' ο Δίας με νόμους δικούς του σκληρά
κι άθεα αυτά κυβερνά

the nascar racing cars and cheering crowds
finally drown out the speech

and then one of the two guys with the HDTV
becomes an announcer of races
and he comes to a microphone
on one side of the screen
and the other guy also takes a mike
at the opposite side of the stage
and there is talk of racing strategies in an automobile race

TOMMY

Dario, talk about your day out there.

DARIO

All right. First of all, the Canadian Club car was very fast today.
It had a good balance.
I got into a good rhythm with it.
I was quite happy with it.
We got back in traffic at one point
and we couldn't make anything happen.
I don't think anybody could.
It was so difficult to pass.
I just had to wait for the guys in front to pit
and save as much fuel as we could at that point.
Scott, he blocked me a couple of times.
Coming down to Turn 13, Buddy ran in front of him,
Scott went for the gap,

had contact with Buddy,
spun it round and collected me.
It was kind of a bizarre situation.

TOMMY

Do you think Scott could have gotten on the brakes?
Was that intentional?
Did you consider it that?

DARIO

You know, some people think it was intentional.
I just know that, apart from the blocking thing,
Scott has raced me cleanly all year.
So I don't think he would have done it intentionally.
I don't know, though.
As I say, my owners have a different opinion of it.

TOMMY

What is your opinion of the track,
the ability to pass,
the ability to be passed?

DARIO

It's very tough.
I think the long layout,
that long straight followed by a 90-degree right
I think that would produce better passing.
This is one of those tracks that's very, very difficult to pass.
But to go out there
and drive the car when the car's working as well as my car was today,
it's so much fun.
It's a real joy.
When the car is floating from bump to bump,
you're in that rhythm,
you see the guys disappearing in your mirror,
that's cool."

TOMMY

Did you actually make contact with Scott?

DARIO

Yeah, I was just about to go by him when he came back.
He bent the right front wishbone and snapped the front wing.
But, as I say, it was the most bizarre situation.
It was a bit of an up-and-down day.
It was just a matter of being smart
and making up as much time as you could in the pits.

Let's face it, I'm not going to be interesting every week.
To be honest,
I might have a boring year at some point.
Definitely last year was one of those that wasn't so spectacular.

TOMMY

I'm sure you weren't aware of this,
but when you took the lead,
the whole stand almost collapsed,
everybody stood up and cheered.
Obviously you couldn't see that.
You do create interest.

DARIO

Thank you.
I'm very fortunate to have a lot of fans,
good fans,
excited fans.
I am a little bit different,
so that's always interesting.
Being something that hasn't proven to do that well in history -
consistently at least -
I guess you'd say I'm a bit of an underdog, too.
Everybody loves that.
And I hope that they enjoy my personality.
I'm definitely honest.
You're going to get the straight truth out of me.
I don't beat around the bush up here.
I think that's important.

[and then an architect comes to the opposite side of the stage
and takes a mike]

THE ARCHITECT

What we're going to do with the stadium is
we're going to build a stadium
which will be big and you know round
of course
but a real presence
so that it will be an anchor
a core
the place where the whole community can come together
for the sheer pleasure of it
the exhilaration of life
I mean people should be serious, too, of course,

and they are
but then there is the sheer exhilaration of being alive
that we also celebrate

[a second architect comes out to the other side of the stage,
takes another microphone]

SECOND ARCHITECT

and then
around the stadium is the neighborhood
the borough
and the city as a whole
and even beyond that
the countryside
and cities in general

FIRST ARCHITECT

and you have to realize
if the world's population is going to grow and grow
we will want to gather in cities
and preserve the countryside
and have both the cities and the countryside
be beautiful
and nourish life
so that would be the plan as a whole.

SECOND ARCHITECT

You start out sensitive to the site
and sensitive to the world
and then you work from there.
And have something new.
Something that honors human history
but, also, something new.

FIRST ARCHITECT

Because human history, too,
is full of stories of the new.

SECOND ARCHITECT

Units of measure are the first condition of all.
The builder takes as his measure what is easiest and most constant:
his pace, his foot, his elbow, his finger.
He has created a unit which regulates the whole work. . . .
It is in harmony with him.
That is the main point.

And so:

The proper size of a bedroom has not changed in thousands of years.
Neither has the proper size of a door
nor the proper size of a community. . . .

Scale:

by that we mean that buildings and their components
are related harmoniously to each other and to human beings.
In urban design we also mean that a city and its parts
are interrelated
and also related to people
and their abilities to comprehend their surroundings.

FIRST ARCHITECT

The science of human settlements is called ekistics.
It classifies human shelter on a 15-point scale
ranging from the human bubble
to a worldwide urban built-up web.

The 15-point scale consists of the following degrees of urbanization:

anthropos

room

house

housegroup

small neighbourhood

neighbourhood

small polis

polis

small metropolis

metropolis

small megalopolis

megalopolis

small eperopolis

eperopolis

ecumenopolis

SECOND ARCHITECT

The important elements to consider
when planning and building this urban matrix
are the visual balanced arrangement of plant, human and building.

FIRST ARCHITECT

We may even have to distinguish between streets that are for people
and streets that are for mechanical conveyors.

SECOND ARCHITECT

Playgrounds and creche,
park and educational buildings,
and arboreal landscaping

must present an orderly and rich pattern and setting
for human development.

[and then a third guy with a microphone
interviews the two architects]

INTERVIEWER

And would you say, then,
that in Athens
their daily life evidenced that human principle?

FIRST ARCHITECT

Oh, yes,
you would have to say,
in the agora
the public square that was at once the marketplace and the meeting place,
there would be an amorphous and spontaneous movement
of people and goods and ideas
from dawn to sunset,

SECOND ARCHITECT

a social axis on which the rest of the city's life spun.

FIRST ARCHITECT

Right.
And in the ecclesia, the democratic assembly of the citizens
the free men
(or at least the more purposeful among them)
would meet to formulate the decisions of the community
on the principles of open participation and individual rights,
and the offices of the city would be celebrated with a pagan zeal,
and at the schools and gymnasia a similar passion,
at least among those who had the leisure,
was devoted to the development of the human mind.

SECOND ARCHITECT

For every citizen
there would be a full range of activity through the year,
a rotation of economic and political and even artistic function,
so that each would be able to participate in all parts of urban life
and none would grow to exert undue dominance.
And though there would be toil for most,
as likely as not with artisan and laborer standing shoulder-to-shoulder,
Athenian life was meant,
and the day was organized,

as much as possible
for the individual's intellectual, aesthetic, sexual, social,
and athletic satisfactions.

FIRST ARCHITECT

In short, Athens was a city "cut close to the human measure."

SECOND ARCHITECT

So, of course,
we are talking about utopia.

[while

some guys come out with chunks of sod
and start covering the stage with grass]

FIRST ARCHITECT

You start with the stadium
or it may be you start with the human being
with the plant and the human and the building
and then you move out from there
through the neighborhoods and the metropolis
and to city planning and human planning
and soon enough you are talking about genetics
and how hard that is
and you might even think it is hard enough to predict the weather
for your city
let alone to launch into biogenetics
this business of thinking ahead

SECOND ARCHITECT

Imagine a rotating sphere that is 8,000 miles in diameter,
has a bumpy surface,
is surrounded by a 25 mile-deep mixture of different gases
whose concentrations vary both spatially and over time,
and is heated,
along with its surrounding gases,
by a nuclear reactor 93,000,000 miles away.

FIRST ARCHITECT

Imagine also that this sphere is revolving around the nuclear reactor
and that some locations are heated more during one part of the revolution and other
locations are heated during another part of the revolution.
And imagine that this mixture of gases
continually receives inputs from the surface below,
generally calmly but sometimes
through violent and highly localized injections.

Then, imagine that after watching the gaseous mixture,
you are expected to predict its state at one location on the sphere
one, two, or more days into the future.

This is essentially the task encountered day by day
by a weather forecaster.

A BYSTANDER

Although
in the evening
is there anything lovelier
than a beautiful evening
a warm summer evening
and so
as it grows dark
you are looking at the stars

ANOTHER BYSTANDER

and you are not trying to predict the course of the universe then
you may have your star charts
and your maps of the heavens
but not because you are in the prediction business
you are simply enjoying it
and enjoying
looking down from the stars
to the ancient cities you see below
vanished civilizations
barely visible from outer space
their last bits scattered here and there
as you look down
and here and there you can see the blasts
the detonating and the crumbling
the devastation
the burnt out world

[blasts-explosions on the TV
and we see visions of a vanished world
ruins
concentric circles of blast damage
detonating, crumbling
vanished civilizations seen from outer space
ruined, lost civilizations]

ARTHUR

Everyday it was hot and dry.
And we got some moisture,
but not much.
And people began to learn how to live with it.

They'd wear a dust mask over their face.
But anybody that lived back there in the dust storm days
have black spots on their lungs.
The doctors wonder what that is,
but that's nothing more
than deposits of dust from the dust storm days.

Most of the houses in the city,
why, you had to clean the dust on top of the rafters
because if you didn't the ceiling would fall down.
And when I was a kid,
that's how I earned part of my money,
was cleaning up dust off of porches and yards
and going up in the ceiling
and scraping between the rafters to get the dirt out.
And I did that, and of course, nobody had any money back there then.
Candy bars were not more than a nickel,
and we had penny candy,
and we had what we called lollipops.

You had to learn how to take old sheets and make strips out of them,
and then you made your glue out of flour,
and you glued around the windows,
and you glued them shut.
But the dust got in anyhow.
And when you went to bed at night, you turned the pillow over.
But even though it was covered,
it'd have dust on it.
It got underneath there some way.

Back in those days people were more congenial
and they got together more and they played cards,
and they played pitch, and pinochle and games like that,
and they had more parties at the houses around
because they didn't have any money and so they'd have gatherings.
On Sunday, we had the band played in the park.

BARNEY

Did you ever have any dust storms that came
when you were out there listening to the band?

ARTHUR

Oh, yeah, sure.

BARNEY

What would people do then?

ARTHUR

Nothing, they just listened to the band!
the worst one was on Black Sunday.
I think it come around two o'clock, I'm not sure. . .
around that time in the afternoon.
I was working down at the tire shop
when we stayed open on Sundays.
And I was crossing the street when it happened,
and when it hit, I couldn't even find the tire shop.
When it came in, it rolled; it didn't just dust.
It rolled over and over and over and over and over when it came in,
and it was coal black; it was coal black.

Baseball was a big sport back there then.
Everybody played baseball.
That was for amusement, and people would congregate, you know.
Sometimes you know there was enough almost in a family.
The Hessmans had enough in the family to have a baseball team.
They had quite a few in their family; they had their own baseball team.
But the churches, different churches
had baseball teams and one thing and another,
and they played baseball. There wasn't much else to do.
We had some horse races once in a while and car races.

My dad was the one that promoted the two-mile race track.
That was before the depression.
He was the one got Barney Oldfield out here.
He was an early day race-track driver.
And he got him to come out here.
I can remember the motorcycle races.
They had a nightclub out there. It was called the Wintergreen.
Then they had, what you call

— where they shot things in the air-
what do they call it. . . ?

BARNEY

Skeet?

ARTHUR

Shoots.

Yeah, things like that.

And fishing. You went fishing whenever you got a chance.
And we had what they call a walk-a-thon.
That was sixteen miles you walked.
And I come in twenty-third.

BARNEY

What for?

ARTHUR

Well, the winner got so much money.
It was a prize.
The first, second, third, fourth, fifth, up to about seven or eight winners, they got so much money.
It was a walk-a-thon.
I didn't have any shoes.
I had an old pair of tennis shoes,
and they was about two sizes too big for me,
and you could hear me clapping on the street when I walked.

ANOTHER BYSTANDER

You have to wonder
if there has ever been a civilization as advanced as our own
because, you know, there could have been
and we would never know
because after they have brought themselves down to ruin
and
after the records have disintegrated
after the clothes have turned to dust
after the bones have turned to ashes
after the buildings have fallen back to earth
what lasts longer than anything else is red pottery
it is the only evidence we have of the very oldest civilizations
and red pottery lasts only 30,000 years
so you have to ask yourself
do we, today, have anything that lasts as long as red pottery?
and the only thing we have that would last that long is:
styrofoam
whether anyone would think
30,000 years from now

And then, we return and repeat some of the things from before-
a chunk of them in the same order
or else a half dozen of them from here and there,
from the early third of the piece.

A guy brings out a rattan chair, puts it down to one side, in the dirt,
and just sits in it facing the audience,
smiling.

A few minutes later
a guy comes out of the mobile home
carrying a gas can;
he sits in a chair,
puts the gas can on the ground next to him,
lights a cigarette,
enjoys it,

and a woman comes out and,
sitting in a chair, or seated on the ground,
puts on her stockings;

a woman in a red dress comes out with her floor lamp
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing

dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing
dancing

there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing
there is music for her dancing

she dances with her floor lamp
and, after a long while, dances out with her floor lamp

and a croquet game goes on:
a ball is hit onto the stage
and, after a moment,
a guy follows along behind it with a croquet mallet;
and then, a moment later,
another guy with a croquet mallet comes out;
and they work their way across the stage and
out the other side

while
a woman comes out and puts down a bowl of Cezanne fruit
and sits down and has a conversation with her two friends;

a baby carriage
is just left in the middle of the stage
or next to a seated woman
or whatever;

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

song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song
song

the woman with the floor lamp returns
and dances to the song

text:

the man with the gas can
talks of love or eternity or infinity
or

we repeat of one of the other texts from the opening of the piece
or

save the Millenarians for the end
or save the Chinese emperor for the end
or styrofoam

or another piece of text like those
or put the french pleasure text here

or:

THE MAN WITH THE GAS CAN

red converse sneakers

going to galleries

sailboats

tea

paris

pina bausch

baroque music (corelli for string orchestra, for example)

sitting in cafés

trees in the winter (their bare boughs)

ancient greek theater

chocolate chip cookies

pretty dresses

driving on a tree-lined highway and noticing the trees

chocolate-covered Cherries

the color red

christmas with the kids

taking a sailboat into the middle of a lake just before dawn to see the sun rise

sidewalk cafés

people watching

Max Ernst

all the theatre pieces by alain platel

and pippo delbono

ariane mnouchkine's piece les ephemeres

the rock quarry in Boulbon where there are late night performances

the south of france in general

provence

a glass of rose in the garden at the Hotel Prieure in Villeneuve Les Avignon

the little restaurant in st. remy where there's a carousel in the back room

while

a guy in a big overcoat to his ankles smoking a cigarette walks through

an old woman with a cane

a woman planting flowers or tending the grass delicately, blade by blade

woman holding her shirt

just holding her shirt, nothing else

lost in thought for a minute?

a couple dancing in the woods

as a pair of children play nearby in the dirt

and

perhaps a few other actions from the beginning of the piece

such as:

a baby carriage

is just left in the middle of the stage

or next to a seated woman

or whatever

a woman comes out with a green picket fence,

sets it standing up by itself

stands in front of it, to one side, for a minute,

then picks up the fence and leaves;

several naked bathers in the plastic wading pool

or one naked woman rolled on in a bathtub

sponging herself

is there a big group dance

or big long duet for the end?

dance

dance

dance

dance

dance

dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance
dance

man and woman kiss and kiss and kiss and kiss and kiss
while a man dressed in black, further back in the woods,
turned away, turns back to look at them (sorrow)

As the lights fade to darkness.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT:

Heaven on Earth incorporates texts taken from the catalogue of Revolution Seeds, Isaac Bashevis Singer, *O. The Oprah Magazine*, and Arthur W. Leonard.

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