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Eterniday

by CHARLES L. MEE

MORNING

The morning lights reveals:

30 antique clocks
a couple of pinball machines
a free standing gas station pump
a life size puppet on strings
it could be pinocchio
two or three old cash registers
some gigantic old cookie tins

a pile of fresh lavender
some sunflowers
a glass of rose wine in the dawn light
a carousel with little ponies
several toy cars
cicadas
olive trees

A little colorful rocking horse on wheels
a golf bag
a collage statue: a life-size figure of a man or a woman
made of a long-handled hoe
and a clothing iron for a head
and arms of clothes hangars

and legs of chairs and stools
and feet of bricks
and a torso of a fan and godknows what else

a toy bus with an open top where a kid can sit
a plastic pig with a pink saddle
a sewing machine
a wooden doorway lintel from an old house in Szechuan
sailing ship models
a TV set
the black wooden torso of a pregnant African woman
a puppet theatre
a carousel with a half-dozen little cars (not horses)
Buddha's head atop a waist-high Corinthian column with gold leaf
posters of Pluto and Donald Duck
a 17th century French landscape painting
a baby carriage or two.

Two people come out
carrying lawn chairs
set them down in front of the garage
don't speak for a while
and then
talk:

RAYMOND
When you look up in the sky
you see
the cumulous clouds drifting overhead—

over there:

2 dogs chasing a deer

a ghost of a witch chasing a pig

TILLY

an astronaut,
with one arm raised,
sailing sideways through the sky

a guy with a unicorn horn on top of his cap

RAYMOND

it may seem random to those who don't understand
how it is for the sky and the clouds
but
the cloud drifting through the sky
that, too, is a destiny
because there are laws
governing the movement of
clusters of moisture through the sky
so the clouds are governed,
as we are,
by the laws of nature

by the possibilities of their existence

by the beginnings and middles and ends
of the times they are passing through

and, if we understood their existence,
we might see that their stories make far more sense than our own

TILLY

that they have a purposeful existence

where we have just a series of random events we live through

RAYMOND

superficial lives of pure ephemeral happenstance

TILLY

without meaning
without significance
without a point or even a reason for being,

RAYMOND

you might as well listen to what the clouds have to say
to one another about their lives
if you want to know anything of any significance whatever
about life
or about the universe
about life within a lifetime within the universe
because when the witch's ghost that is chasing the pig
cries out
stop pig! stop pig!
it could be that Aristotle never said anything more meaningful
or profound about life than that

TILLY

and when the pig says
stand back! I have my life!
You have no right to chase me!
who can contradict him?
on what grounds?
on what set of philosophical principles
more entitled to respect than what he himself has said
coming from his own understanding of his own existence?

RAYMOND

what would the cloud with the unicorn on his head say?
Stand aside! I have the privileged position here!
I am educated! I have read Goethe!
I will tell you who is entitled to space in this universe
and which life is worth living?
Which life is lived in vain?
Which life is as well forgotten for all the rest of eternity?
No, says the astronaut!

No, bark the dogs chasing the deer!
No, says the deer!
I am entitled to fame and immortality!

TILLY

even as a shift in the breeze
transforms me into nothingness!

[At one side of the stage is a garage,
wide enough for two cars,
with a white door that opens by rolling up into the ceiling of the garage.

And now
the garage door opens.

There are people inside the garage.
They are having a party.
And, when they notice that we see them,
they all turn toward us and sing a passage from an opera.

And, while they sing,
someone toward the back of the garage,
hidden from us by the crowd of singers,
throws random stuff out the side window of the garage—
cleaning up the garage for some reason.]

singing opera
singing opera

singing opera
singing opera
singing opera
singing opera

[Part way through the singing,
a solo dancer steps forward
and begins to dance.]

singing opera
singing opera
singing opera
singing opera
singing opera

[And, then,
a little further into the song,
there is a parade of dresses—
which is to say,
three or four young women come out in beautiful dresses
and show them off.]

singing opera
singing opera
singing opera
singing opera

[And then,
even a little further into the song,
some young guys come out and strut their stuff, too.]

singing opera
singing opera
singing opera
singing opera
singing opera

And then,
a hot young woman in a minidress —
one of the women in the dress parade —
opts out of the parade to sit at a table with a telephone,
looking sexy and seductive,
crossing one leg over the other and then switching crossed legs
and switching again
as the singing continues
[or this whole performance could be done by one of the guys
having a phone conversation]

singing opera
singing opera

and finally she begins to speak into her cell phone:

Hello
Hello
Hi
Hello
hi
hello hello

[she hangs up phone
crosses her other leg
then picks it up again]

hello
hello hello

[hangs up
crosses opposite leg]

Hello
Hello hello
hello
Hi
hello hello

[from time to time she says 'who is this?' or 'is this raimondo'
or something of the sort

but mostly she only says hello hello hello
while the singing continues]

singing opera
singing opera

[And, finally,
a pot of geraniums is brought out and set down on the table
then a pot of plum flowers is brought out and set down on the table
then another pot of flowers is brought out and set down on the table
and another
until the young woman on the phone has disappeared behind the flowers
and the singing stops.

A man is left standing awkwardly to one side.
His name is Mandeville.
He wears an extravagantly historical costume from the 14th century.
Maybe he's been at a costume party?
Does he have a beard?
He speaks.]

MANDEVILLE

If you come from the west,
from England or Ireland or Wales or Scotland or Norway,
you may,
if you choose,
go through Almayne and through the kingdom of Hungary,
and on to the land of Polayne, and Pannonia,
and so to Silesia.

And the King of Hungary is a great lord
and rules a kingdom that stretches from Hungary to Sclavonia
and Comania.
And you pass through this kingdom
to a city called Cypron,
all the way at the end of Hungary.

And then, in Greece there are a good many islands—
as Calliste, Calcas, Oertige, Tesbria, Mynia, Flaxon, Melo, Carpate,
and Lemnos.
And, toward the end of Macedonia, high hills
the highest of all being the one called Olympus
which is so high, it rises above the clouds.

This is where the philosophers once spent some time.
And they had to hold sponges to their noses
because the air was so dry.
And in the dust and powder of those hills,
they wrote letters and figures with their fingers.
And at the year's end they came again,
and found the same letters and figures,
that they had written in the dust the year before,
undisturbed by wind or rain.

From Greece
one can go on to many different islands—
and to the land of Lamary
where it is the custom that men and women go all naked.
And they scorn any strangers they see who are clothed.

And in that country, too,
there is a dreadful custom.
They eat human flesh more happily than any other sort of flesh
even though there is an abundance there
of fish and corn and gold and silver.
But merchants travel to that country
and bring their children with them
to sell them to the people there.
And, if the children are fat,
they are eaten right away.
And if they are not fat,
they are fed until they are fat,
and then they're eaten.
Because, they say, that's the best flesh
and the sweetest in all the world.

[HENRY is sitting at a café table.
The waitress brings him an espresso.]

BEATRICE (the waitress)
How is it these days
with everything going on—
what we've gone through,
where we've come from—
how can people manage?

HENRY
Exactly.

BEATRICE
Such a landscape of chaos and confusion.
Random stuff.
Daily life.
Things that happen you never planned on
when you got up in the morning.
Things you think have nothing to do with you
and yet
that's where you are
that's where you live.

that's the water you're swimming in.
that's the woods you're wandering in.
that's the conversation you're walking through.

Sometimes in life
you look for love
but then
with everything going on
you think:
How can anyone find their way?
How do we get through our lives?
Find our way to one another?

HENRY
Right.

BEATRICE
Right.

HENRY
Find our way to one another.

[She turns and leaves.

He drinks his coffee.]

AFTERNOON

Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.

Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.
Music.

A guy rides in on a bike.
He kicks his kickstand and parks the bike.
Then he turns and leaves.
In a moment he rides in on another bike,
parks it,
turns and leaves,
carries in another bike,
puts it down on the ground,
goes off,
comes back in carrying bike parts,
goes off,
comes back in carrying more parts,
goes off,
comes back in carrying a tool kit,
goes off,
comes back in carrying a sign that says:
"going somewhere?
we can fix it"
and mounts his sign on the pile of ruined bikes.

[Several people help drag in a wrecked car,
a completely filthy, ruined car
— maybe, to make it easier, a small car like a Chevrolet Aveo —

with junk piled high on its roof and in its open trunk
and under the raised front hood
—thousands of pieces of household junk.

a guy wanders in wearing a wet suit with suspenders holding a wash tub around his
waist
a shower over his head
carrying a sandwich board saying: Don Quixote.]

DON QUIXOTE

Streets are one thing.
That's simple enough.
But they say that traffic circles
were invented by this guy named Eugene Henard
who was a French architect
and he invented the traffic circle in 1877
but, in fact, that's not true
because if you read Dante's Divine Comedy
you can see there
like

[as he speaks

a clown comes in on his hands and knees barking like a dog

a guy wearing a crown of flowers

and a Comedie Francaise guy fencing by himself]

DON QUIXOTE [continuing]

a total design for traffic control
including traffic circles
and clover leafs, like the exits and entrances on superhighways
because the circles of hell
are like traffic circles
but even more complicated
because they are evaluating people's moral worth
as well as their navigational abilities
and driving skills

and you can see people
say, as they approach the seventh circle of hell
they slow down
just the way you do when you enter a traffic circle in Paris
and then speed up
and like veer around to the left and right
and Dante knew all this
like practically six hundred years before Eugene Henard
and traffic circles will be with us probably forever
because they really work
and you can keep moving
you don't have to stop
and you don't even need to slow down always
sometimes you can just keep going almost full speed
and people know that they just have to get out of your way
especially if you honk at them
and flash your lights at the same time.

[To one side, a guy juggles clubs and another guy juggles balls?

an old guy in a superman costume slumped in a wheelchair
accompanied by an old woman in a wonder woman costume with a walker

someone hands out postcards for a fringe festival superman show

while a guy sings a solo
sings
sings

sings
sings
sings
sings
sings
sings
sings
sings]
sings]

MANDEVILLE

Going by sea toward the south,
is another great island called Dondun.
In that island are folks of all kinds
which is to say that the father eats the son,
the son eats the father,
the husband the wife,
and the wife the husband.

The king of this island is a great lord
and has under his rule some fifty-four islands that give tribute to him.
And in all the islands
it might be said that there are folks of all kinds.

In one of them are people of immense stature
which is to say: giants.
And they are, frankly, hideous in appearance.
They have one eye in the middle of their foreheads
and they eat nothing but raw fish and raw flesh.

In another of the islands
are people who go about on their hands and feet.
They're all feathered
and they will jump up lightly into the trees
and from tree to tree,
like squirrels or apes.

In yet another of the islands are some people
who have no heads.
And their eyes are in their shoulders.

Nearby, in another island,
are some people who have upper lips that are so big
that
when they sleep in the sun
they cover their faces with that lip.

And then, in yet another island,
are people who have feet the size of parasols
so that, in the afternoon,
when the sun is hot,
they can lift one foot above their heads and so they can sit in the shade.

And beyond these islands there is another island called Pytan.
The people of that country do no work of any kind at all
because they eat nothing.
And so they don't need to work.
They are very small.
And they live by the smell of wild apples.
And if they travel to some other place,
they take the apples with them
because if they lost the scent of the apples
they would die.

And then,
beyond Pytan,
you come to California,
where some of the inhabitants have their heads in their stomachs
so that they have intestines for brains.
And in the streets
they all go naked
and the businessmen have their heads up their asses.

TILLY
You say they have intestines for brains.
I've heard, too,
that their entire diet is made up of tarte tatins.

RAYMOND
Of what?

TILLY

That they only eat tarte tatins
for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

RAYMOND

I'd do that, too, if I could.

TILLY

You could.

RAYMOND

My doctor wouldn't let me.

TILLY

Your doctor!
What does he have to do with it?

RAYMOND

I would eat tarte tatins
and drink Chateau Neuf du Pape
and sometimes a glass of rose
sitting in the garden in the afternoon
and, if it wouldn't hurt too much
or become a habit leading down the path to hell
I'd like to have just one cigarette every day
or even one every other day
with an espresso, in the café
one of the cafes
and then I'd drive out to the hospital
where Van Gogh spent that year
painting the cypresses and the olive trees
and you think:
he was crazy
and pathetic
what a tragedy
how he suffered
but you know
he turned out a hundred a thirty paintings
or a hundred and forty paintings

or, like a hundred and forty three paintings
like he turned out a painting every two and a half days
for a year!
that's where he turned out The Starry Night!
I don't even mention the olive grove
or the field with the red poppies
and that's what I would do
I would be a painter if I could even just hold a brush right
if I just had enough talent to dip a brush into some paint
and slather it on the canvas
because that is a perfect life
you just get up in the morning
and you get your cup of coffee
and you wander into your studio
and whatever catches your eye is what you do
you think
oh, that painting I was working on yesterday
that could use a little splash of red up there near the top
and so you dip your brush into the paint
and you splash some red
and then a little yellow
some green here over on the right
you think
okay
I could put a sailboat up there in the sky
and then you have another sip of your coffee
and you notice the little ceramic vase
you had been working on the day before yesterday
and you think
I could put some kind of flat, muted purple
right there where its stomach bulges out a little bit
and then you see that drawing
that fell on the floor
off that table down near the other end of your studio
and you go to pick it up
and you just can't resist
doing a little something to it
adding a little picnic table to the landscape
and by the time you finish that

you find yourself down at the other end of your studio
near the door out onto the terrace
so you go out onto the terrace
and sit at the little table there overlooking the vineyard
because by then it's time for lunch
and your wife brings you a sandwich
and maybe a little glass of beaume de venise
and after lunch
you make love for the rest of the afternoon.
That's the life I have in mind.

SUPERMAN

That's the life I have in mind, too.

WONDER WOMAN

I would live it with you.

[While these conversations go on,
Henry and Beatrice
stand in the midst of the goings on,
dumbfounded by the conversations.]

SUPERMAN

In the mental hospital?

WONDER WOMAN

No, we could get a little house just on the edge of St. Remy
with a little swimming pool
it wouldn't have to be so big, so expensive
because we'd have the whole town for themselves
all the cafes
the little streets to wander down
the craft fair on the weekends
with little things to buy for not much money
and that restaurant tucked into that little street

SUPERMAN

I wouldn't mind
going back to that café in St. Remy

where I had lunch
sitting outdoors
where I first saw you.

WONDER WOMAN

The one on the corner
with the carousel across the street?

SUPERMAN

Oh, right!

Sure!

That one, too!

I was thinking of the one
a little further around the circle
next to the store where they have postcards
with the pictures of the lavender fields.

WONDER WOMAN

Or the one right next to it
with the canopy over the sidewalk.

SUPERMAN

Or even the one further down
set back from the sidewalk, behind the stone wall
with the little garden.

WONDER WOMAN

Or the one
all the way back around the circle
the one with the carousel inside.

SUPERMAN

The one with the carousel inside.

Right.

Sure.

Well,

that's my favorite.

WONDER WOMAN

And then you sit there
and see the other people passing by
and you hear them talk
and you think:
they have lives, too.
Your life is not the only life.

There are a lot of lives.
We could just go to all of the cafes.

SUPERMAN

In one afternoon?

WONDER WOMAN

Well, in a few afternoons,
if we just keep going around the circle.

SUPERMAN

Okay.
I'd like that.
That's my idea of a perfect life.

[The garage door opens.
A big partying group inside the garage sings
while stuff is thrown out the side window of the garage.

And some guys dance.]

song and dance
song and dance

song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance

A whole chamber orchestra enters,
and we expect they will play,
but they quickly put down their tubas and trumpets and violins and cellos
and put together two cafe tables
and start getting out their lunch.

They are all dressed in their underwear.

As they set up the tables,
an elegantly dressed woman could sing a solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo

solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo
solo

while
the people in undies
take their places around the tables.

And then, while the woman still sings,
a rack of clothes is brought on,
and everyone gets up from the tables
and takes their time choosing just the right outfit
and getting dressed in dinner clothes.

And, while everyone is getting dressed,
Raymond speaks,
although no one is paying attention to him.

RAYMOND
I always think they say
clothes make the man
and I guess that's true
and then
if you take off all your clothes

you're not a man?
because you're "desocialized"?
or you could say stripped down to your essentials
but really, too,
desocialized at the same time
and then,
when you choose this item of clothing
or that
and put it on
then you are "re-socializing" yourself?
if that's the right word?
I think that's not an exaggeration
and then
when you sit down with others at the dinner table
and break bread
the most basic social ritual of all
I think then you see:
society is reconstituted.

TILLY
Right.

MANDEVILLE
And that,
I think,
is essential.

[Don Quixote clinks his spoon on a glass
to get everyone's attention for his dinner speech.]

DON QUIXOTE
Because,
in Sophocles' play Philoctetes,
the soldier Philoctetes was injured on his way to Troy.
According to one version of the story
he had been bitten in the heel by a snake
and he had developed an open loathsome stinking sore.
And so, of course, he began to moan about it.

And so his companions dumped him on a deserted island
abandoned him there
while they went on to Troy.

Ten years passed.

The Greeks weren't able to win the war.

Finally they learned from Helenus, the son of the King of Troy,
that the Greeks would never be able to win the war
without the bow and arrows of Philoctetes.

So the Greeks went back to get Philoctetes.

To beg him to join them after all.

And, astonishingly enough,
he did.

He went with the soldiers back to Troy
after they had dumped him on that island,
after they had left him there for ten years
after they had left him to die.

Now they wanted him back
not because they valued him personally in any way.

They only valued his bow and arrows.

They valued his skill at killing.

And he went with them.

Why?

Because he understood,
as all the Greeks understood,
a man alone on an island
is not entirely a human being.

A person can not be a real human being
unless he lives in human society,
however dreadful that society may be.

TILLY

Although

when you drive through the countryside
and you see the fields of sunflowers
you can understand how a painter would come
from the gray skies of Holland

and arrive here on a sunny day
and his mind would just explode.
And then,
driving along the roads
with the trees on both sides
the story is Napoleon had all the trees planted
so his soldiers could march long distances in the shade.
And you hear the cicadas:
you think
is this a love song
they sing and sing and sing
they can't stop crying out for love?
So after that
all you can think anymore
is that you wish you would both be naked
the way everyone always used to be naked all the time
lying under the olive trees
in the afternoon
listening to the cicadas
making love.

[Henry and Beatrice are apart from the others.]

HENRY

I see you
and then I don't see you again
and then whatever I've been thinking
or wherever I've been looking for you
gets interrupted
and a person loses track
of where he is
or where he was going
or what he even had in mind
and then our lives
it's like everyone says
the lives we live are as incoherent
as the clouds in the sky
and we don't understand them
even as well as we understand the weather

song of loss and mourning and love
song of loss and mourning and love

A guy breaks a dozen wine bottles on the cobblestones,
puts his face into the pile of broken glass,
has another guy stand on his neck to press his face down into the glass—
and, while we were all expecting some miraculous trick to avoid being cut, he
stands up with a lacerated forehead—
while a teen age girl hands out fliers for some other show.

The sleek old Mafioso in the chair puts on dark sunglasses.

A woman in a beautiful black dress enters
and paces while she smokes
she is angry, hostile
as though challenging anyone's right to challenge her smoking
or her being there
and, in the end, she just turns upstage and rushes out.

She returns, dragging a guy by the hand.
He is naked from the waist up.
She shoves him to the ground roughly over and over
as she rips the nipple ring out of the naked guy's chest
and leaves him bleeding from the wound.

3 girls in lingerie on leashes
and a guy with a whip.

A woman comes downstage
and close to the audience
sits at a dinner table
is given two finger bowls, one for each hand
by tall serving men,

walks, stumbles, shuffles, lurches on his tiptoes,
falls over to the side,
goes into a crouch,
goes to the ground,
writhing.
This, too, just seems intensely real.

A guy stands to one side with bloody hands
showing them to the audience.

The black burned cripple writhes.]

SUPERMAN

At the baths, my cabin neighbors:
A little Spaniard, a Russian general.
Thin bodies, feverish looks, narrow shoulders.
Invalids' wheel chairs pulled about.
Steam cabinets.
Mr. B., sometimes in the wheeled chair,
Plump, white skin, healthy appearance;
At other times, he has to be carried, held up, shuffling along.
Noises from the showers, deep-sounding voices....
What sadness all this gives me,
This physical life that I can no longer lead.
Poor birds of the night,
Beating their wings against the walls,
With open eyes that cannot see....

The to and fro of patients.
Eyes either feverish or lifeless.
The fellow
asleep in the sun
infested with flies.
Mr. C. —
who lives with a noise perpetually in his head
like the whistle of a locomotive
or rather
like steam escaping.

And to see my neighbors eat is appalling;
Mouths without teeth,
Affected gums,
The toothpicks in the decayed molars,
And those who eat on only one side
and roll about what they have in their mouths,
And those who chew their cud,
And the gnawers.
All those jaws functioning,
Those gluttonous and haggard eyes
never raised from their plates,
Those furious glances at the dish slow in coming.
And the painful digestions,
The two toilets at the end of the corridor,
Side by side,
So that one can hear all the groans of constipation
Or the rich splash and the rustling of the paper.
Horror, oh, the horror of living.

The striving to walk straight,
The fear of being taken with one of those shooting pains
that glue me to the spot
Or wrench me and make me lift my leg like a knife grinder.

In the courtyard
The coming and going of the patients.
A procession of diverse maladies,
Each more sinister than the rest.
Burning or expressionless glances.
And the sparkling light of the blue sky.

The little Spanish woman with hair combed flat and well oiled
Looking anywhere from twelve to sixty years old.
A red dress, long earrings,
a long yellow head resting on the knucklebone of a hand,
On her little chair.
At night she sleeps sitting up.
Is afraid of the rats.

Silhouettes of old men on crutches
along the country roads between the high hedges.
The mathematics professor who has the same illness as I.
I think of him,
I can see him pushing his feet along,
One after the other,
Pretty well done in and staggering;
Like walking on ice.
I pity him.
The maids say he urinates in bed.

Clever
the way death reaps and gathers its harvests.

But what somber harvests.
Whole generations don't fall at once;
That would be too sad, too visible.
But bit by bit.
The meadow is attacked on several sides at the same time.
One day, one will go;
The other, some time after;

One must reflect, glance about oneself,
to notice the empty spaces,
the vast contemporary killing.

MANDEVILLE

There is also an island called Motanka
where all the women who are married have a thing on their heads
that looks like a man's foot
all decorated with great pearls
and above the foot are peacocks' feathers
and that thing stands atop their heads like a crest
in token of the fact that they are under man's foot
and under the subjection of man.
And only the women who are not married
don't have a foot on their heads.

And from Caffolos
you can sail to an island called Tracoda,
where the people are all beasts
and unreasonable
and they live in caves
and they eat the flesh of serpents
and they don't speak words
but they hiss as serpents do.

And then, on the next island, called Caffolos,
the men of that country,
when their friends are sick,
they hang them from the trees—
because they say that it is better that the birds eat them,
because the birds are the angels of God,
and otherwise they would be eaten by the foul worms of the earth.

And, of the people who live there,
those who are abortive and stillborn number 335.
Those who die of old age number 916.
Apoplex, and sodainly 68
Blasted 4
Bleeding 3
Burnt, and Scalded 3
Cancer, Gangrene, and Fistula 26
Childbed 161
Cold, and Cough 41
Consumption, and Cough 2423
Convulsion 684
Cut of the Stone 2
Dropsy, and Tympany 185
Drowned 47
Executed 8
Fainted in Bath 1
Falling-Sickness 3
Flox, and small Pox 139
Found dead in the Streets 6
French-Pox 18
Frighted 4

Gout 9
Grief 12
Hanged,
and made-away with themselves 11

[if this list is too tedious for someone to speak,
it can be projected on the wall]

Jaundice 57
Itch 1
Killed by several Accidents 27
Lethargy 3
Leprosy 1
Lunatic 12
Measles 5
Murdered 3
Palsy 27
Plague 3597
Poisoned 3
Purples, and spotted Fever 145
Rickets 150
Rupture 16
Scurvy 32
Smothered, and stifled 2
Sores, Ulcers,
broken and bruised limbs 15
Shot 7
Sodainly 63
Starved 4
Stopping of the Stomach 29
Swine-Pox 4
Teeth, and Worms 767
Thrush 57
Vomiting 6
Wolf 8
Worms 147

[While this list of the causes of death goes on,
Beatrice enters,
looks around,
leaves.

Enters again a little later,
looks around,
leaves.

And then, when the list comes to an end,
Henry enters,
looks around.]

HENRY
Beatrice?
Beatrice?

[Now a church choir sings gregorian chant dirge.]
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge

[Henry, after looking around a little more,
leaves.]

gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge

gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge
gregorian chant dirge

[As another woman in a black dress and also a black veil
enters up center and comes all the way slowly down center
holding a bouquet of flowers in front of her
motionless in every way except her walking very slowly
to lay the bouquet flowers on the ground
her eyes are streaming tears of blood.

A guy with downs syndrome
enters wearing a crimson prom dress.

A guy on a leash.

Guys dancing.

Old mafia don with sunglasses returns.

We might see on film, if not live,
a grand piano in flames.
As it burns, its strings pop,
making music.]

RAYMOND

No man was ever born
but he must suffer.
He buries his children and gets others in their place;

then dies himself.
And yet men bear it hard,
that only give dust to dust!
Life is a harvest that man must reap like ears of corn;
one grows, another falls.
Why should we moan at this,
the path of Nature that we must tread?

Heaven and earth were once a single form;
but when they were separated from each other into two,
they bore and delivered into the light all things:
trees, winged creatures,
beasts reared by the briny sea—
and the human race.

Let any man get hold of as much pleasure as he can
as he lives his daily life;
the future will always be unknown.

The best thing is a life free from sickness,
the power each day
to take hold of what one desires.

The time of life is short,
and once a person is hidden beneath the earth
he lies there for all time.

A man is nothing but breath and shadow.

Time makes all things dark
and brings them to oblivion.

A cup without a bottom is not put on the table.

First you will see a crop in flower,
all white;
then a round mulberry
that has turned red;
lastly

in time with the crashing Mozart music
and then throws herself to the ground on her back over and over and over
she becomes covered with dust
as she kicks and writhes wildly on the ground on her back
like a cockroach frantic on its back.

Beatrice is standing there
dressed as a bride
in a white wedding dress
holding a bouquet of flowers

Henry joins her.
He, too, is dressed for the wedding.

They have their photo taken
looking confused and disoriented.

And then they leave,
still looking confused about just where they are going.
They look back at the wedding guests—
looking for their parents in the midst of the party?
And they are escorted off.

And then,
when the music ends,
Tilly speaks.

TILLY

I would eat tarte tatins
and drink Chateau Neuf du Pape
and sometimes a glass of rose
sitting in the garden in the afternoon
and, if it wouldn't hurt too much
or become a habit leading down the path to hell
I'd like to have just one cigarette every day
or even one every other day
with an espresso, in the café
one of the cafes
and then I'd drive out to the hospital

where Van Gogh spent that year
painting the cypresses and the olive trees
and you think:
he was crazy
and pathetic
what a tragedy
how he suffered
but you know
he turned out a hundred a thirty paintings
or a hundred and forty paintings
or, like a hundred and forty three paintings
like he turned out a painting every two and a half days
for a year!
that's where he turned out The Starry Night!
I don't even mention the olive grove
or the field with the red poppies
and that's what I would do
I would be a painter if I could even just hold a brush right
if I just had enough talent to dip a brush into some paint
and slather it on the canvas
because that is a perfect life
you just get up in the morning
and you get your cup of coffee
and you wander into your studio
and whatever catches your eye is what you do
you think
oh, that painting I was working on yesterday
that could use a little splash of red up there near the top
and so you dip your brush into the paint
and you splash some red
and then a little yellow
some green here over on the right
you think
okay
I could put a sailboat up there in the sky
and then you have another sip of your coffee
and you notice the little ceramic vase
you had been working on the day before yesterday
and you think

I could put some kind of flat, muted purple
right there where its stomach bulges out a little bit
and then you see that drawing
that fell on the floor
off that table down near the other end of your studio
and you go to pick it up
and you just can't resist
doing a little something to it
adding a little picnic table to the landscape
and by the time you finish that
you find yourself down at the other end of your studio
near the door out onto the terrace
so you go out onto the terrace
and sit at the little table there overlooking the vineyard
because by then it's time for lunch
and your husband brings you a sandwich
and maybe a little glass of beaume de venise
and after lunch
you make love for the rest of the afternoon.
That's the life I have in mind.

DAWN

The garage door opens.

20 people in brightly colored silly swimming suits
dance on the beach
to what might as well be Italian beach boys music
it goes on and on and on
happily ecstatically
until they are finally all running around aimlessly
some of them screaming
at the tops of their lungs in joy
and all the others singing and dancing

song and dance
song and dance

song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance
song and dance

THE END

A NOTE: Sources for *Eterniday* are *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* and Alphonse Daudet's *La Doulou*, the journals he wrote in the last years of his life, translated by Milton Garver.

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