

excerpts from

SCARECROW

ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

by

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translated by

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Scarecrow has 25 sections from which I have selected these. I'm putting them out there to be available individually as monologues or as little multiple-voice theater pieces.

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INTRODUCTION *(for one male or female voice)*

I know nothing

You know nothing

Thou knowest nothing

He knows nothing

Men know nothing

Women know nothing

You all know nothing

None of us knows anything at all.

The disorientation of my generation has
its explanation in the direction of our education,
whose idealization of action, was --- without question! --- a mystification,
in distinction to our passion for meditation,
contemplation
and masturbation.

(Guttural, as guttural as can be.)

I believe I believe in that which

I believe I do not believe.

And I believe I don't believe

in what I believe I believe.

"Song of the froggies"

And above the stairways climbing overhead!

And below the ladders curving underneath!

Is it there?

It isn't here!

Is it thither?

It isn't hither!

And above the stairways climbing overhead!

And below the ladders curving underneath!

I *(for one male voice)*

I couldn't care less if women
have breasts like fresh magnolias or
withered figs,
skin smooth as a peach or rough as sandpaper.

I accord it an importance equal to zero whether
they wake up with the breath of an aphrodisiac or
the breath of an insecticide.

I am perfectly capable of enduring a nose on them that
could take first prize in a carrot exposition.

But here's the thing! --
and in this I am inflexible --
I do not pardon them, under any pretext,
if they don't know how to fly.

If they can't fly,
they have wasted the time they took
trying to seduce me!

It was for this -- and no other -- reason that
I fell in love, so madly, with Maria Luisa.

What did I care that
her lips came in installments and
that she suffered from jealous rages?

What did I care about her duck feet and
her looks like those of a
fortuneteller holding back a secret?

Maria Luisa was a veritable plume!

From the break of day she was flying.

She flew from the bedroom to the kitchen,
from the dining room to the pantry.

She flew to prepare my bath,
to layout my shirt.

She flew to do her shopping,
to do her household chores ...

With what impatience I awaited her return,
on the wing,
from some trip in the outskirts!

There in the distance,
lost among the clouds,
would be a rosy little dot.

"Maria Luisa!
Maria Luisa!"
I would cry ...
and in a few seconds she
would already be clasping me with
her feathery legs,
in order to lift me in flight to
someplace or other.

For miles of silence we traced
the lines of a caress that brought us close
to paradise;
for hours on end we nestled in a cloud,
like the angels,
then suddenly corkscrewed,
like a dead leaf,
to make a forced, spasmodic landing.

How delicious to hold a woman so light ...
though, now and then,
she might make us see stars!

How voluptuous to spend
the days among the clouds ...
and to pass the nights in solo flight!

After we have know an ethereal woman,
what possible attractions could a terrestrial
woman offer us?

In truth,
is there any substantial difference between
living with a cow and
living with a woman who has her buttocks three
and a half feet off of the ground?

I, for my part,
am incapable of comprehending the allure of
the pedestrian woman,
and no matter how hard I try to conceive it,
find it impossible to achieve
or even to imagine better lovemaking than
that which is experienced
while soaring through the heavens.

3 *(for one male and one female voice)*

(male)

The only life I had ever known was
the humble one afforded me by
my position as an employee of
the post office.

So my wife,
who has a mania for thinking out loud and
saying the first thing that pops into her head,
took it upon herself to assign me fortunes more absurd than
any you would ever imagine.

Out of the blue,
while reading the evening papers,
she turned to me and asked,
without preliminaries:

(female)

Why didn't you give up the house and the cat?
It would have been so nice to take
a cruise on a frigate! ...

During the moonlit nights,
the sailors gather on deck beneath
the outspread sails.

Some play the accordion,
others fondle a rubber woman.

You smoke your pipe with a mate.
The sea has hardened your pupils.
You have seen it all.

Is there any port, is there any city where you
have not spent the night?

Does there yet remain some
undiscovered horizon towards which the sails may loft you?

One day when the calm has become a curse,
you will go down to your bunk
untie your silk kerchief and hang yourself
with a woman's pigtail.

(male)

And not content with having me circumnavigate the globe,
even though I've been at anchor
in the post office for more than seventeen years:

(female)

Do you remember the braids I had when
you first met me? ...

At that time I imagined that you would
become a soldier,
and my nipples caught fire at the thought that
you would have a rugged, hairy chest,
like a doormat.

You were strong.
You scaled the walls of the convent.
You went to bed with the abbess.
You left her pregnant.

To what time,
to what place,
does a story like yours belong? ...

You have played the game of life so many times
that you have the smell of a worn deck of cards.

With what eagerness,
with what tenderness I
kissed your wounds!

You were savage!
You were silent!

You liked cheeses that
tasted like a satyr's groin ...
and the first night,
when you possessed me,
you broke my spine against
the backboard of the bed.

(male)

And before I could prove just how far I was
from perpetrating these barbarities,
that I aspired to nothing greater,
during my entire lifetime,
than gaining admission to
the Velez-Sarsfield Country Club:

(female)

Now I see you kneeling in a church with
the smell of a wine cellar.

Look at your hands;
they are good for nothing but turning the pages of missals.

You meekness is so great that
you are ashamed of your purity,
of your prudence.

You fall on your knees at every moment to kiss
the pages that sign and complain.

When a woman looks at you,
you lower your eyelids and feel naked and ashamed.

Your sweat is pleasing to prostitutes and dogs.
You like to walk feverish through the rain.
You like to lie down in an open field and gaze up at the stars ...

One night ---
in which you come face to face with God ---
you will enter a stable without being seen and
stretch out on the straw,
so as to die with your arms around the neck
of some old cow ...

6 *(probably male voice)*

My nerves twang out of tune as often
as my female cousins.

If by chance, when I lie down to rest,
I do not have myself tied to the bedposts,
fifteen minutes later I wake up on top
of my clothes cabinet.

In this quarter of an hour,
however brief,
I have had time to strangle my brothers,
to launch myself off some cliff and
to impale myself upon the needles of a cactus.

My digestion invents a quantity of crustaceans that
amuse themselves poking holes in my intestines.

Since childhood I have had to have my drawers
unbuttoned before I could sit down anywhere,
and when I blow my nose
it is a rare occasion when
I don't find expelled into my handkerchief
the cadaver of a cockroach.

Also,
when it rains,
I feel a pain in the leg that was amputated
three years ago.

My right kidney is a peanut.
My left kidney is on display in
the Museum of the Medical Faculty.

I am a polyglot stutterer.
I lost everything in the lottery,
right down to my toenails,
and at the moment of consummating
the matrimonial act,
I found myself married to a cockatoo.

The margins of encyclopedias are
not sufficiently spacious to channel
my weariness and pain.

Even the most optimistic ideas travel
by funeral coach when they pass through my brain.

The yawn of unmade beds repels me,
I feel no propensity for brooding the breasts of women
and it makes me sick that druggists so infrequently
mix up their preparations of strychnine.

Under these conditions,
I sincerely believe that the best thing to do is
swallow a capsule of dynamite and then,
with complete tranquility,
light up a cigarette.

7 (*one voice, male or female*)

Everything was love ... love!
There was nothing but love.

Everywhere I looked I found love.
I could talk of nothing but love.

There was love that passed the test,
love with vanilla,
love to go,
love on the installment plan.
Love to be analyzed,
love that's been analyzed.
Ultramarine love.
Equestrian love.

Love of *papier-mache*,
love with cream and sugar ...
full of preparations,
of preventions;
full of short circuits,
of shortcomings.

Love with a big O,
an O in majuscule,
creaming with meringue,
covered with white flowers ...

Spermatozoic love,
Esperantists love.

Disinfected love,
unctuous love ...

Love with its accessories,
with its provisions;
with its lapses in spelling and punctuality;
with its interruptions,
cardiac and telephonic.

Love that ignites the hearts of orangutans,
of firemen.

Love exalting the song of the frogs
beneath the boughs,
love that pulls the buttons off your bootees,
that feeds on misgivings and mixed salad.

Love imposed and love un-postponed.

Love incautious and love incandescent.

Everlasting love.

Naked love.

Love-love that is,

put simply,

love.

Love and love ...

and nothing else but love!

11 *(for male or female voice)*

If I'd had the slightest inkling of
what I was going to hear after death,
I would never have committed suicide.

Scarcely has the bit of music that
spoils our final moments begun to fade
and we close our eyes to sleep for all eternity than
the arguments and family scenes begin.

What disregard for good form!
What absolute lack of composure!
What ignorance of what it means to die well!

A tenement house full of ill-wed Calabrians
in full conjugal catastrophe couldn't give even an
approximate notion of
the hurly-burly produced every moment.

While some neighbor kicks around inside
his casket,
those next door trade insults like truck drivers,
and at the same time that something
moves and clatters,
peals of laughter emerge from those who
inhabit the tomb in front.

Some cadaver considers it his right to make known
at the top of his lungs
desires that he had successfully repressed during
his entire existence as a citizen, and,
not content with informing us of
his every meanness and infamy,
within five minutes of our being installed in our niche he
makes us privy to the thoughts and opinions that
all the other inhabitants of the cemetery have
about us.

It is useless to plug up your ears.
The comments,
the sarcastic snickers,
the rubble that falls from who knows where so
torment us at every moment of the day and
insomniac night that it's enough to
make us want to commit suicide all over again.

12 *(for one or many voices, male and/or female)*

They admire,
they desire,
they gravitate

they caress,
they undress,
they osculate

they pant,
they sniff,
they penetrate

they weld,
they meld,
they conjugate,

they sleep,
they wake,
they illuminate

they covet,
they touch,
they fascinate

they chew,
they taste,
they salivate

they tangle,
they twine,
they segregate

they languish,
they lapse,
they reintegrate

they wriggle,
they squirm,
they infundibulate

they fumble,
they fondle,
they perfricate

they swoon,
they twitch,
they resuscitate

they sulk,
they pout,
they contemplate

they ignite,
they inflame,
they incinerate

they erupt,
they explode,
they detonate

they nab,
they grab,
they dislocate

they clinch,
they clutch,
they concatenate

they solder,
they dissolve,
they calcinate

they paw,
they claw,
they assassinate

they choke,
they shudder,
they embrocate

they redden,
they madden,
they federate

they repose,
they loll,
they oscitate

they splice,
they smolder,
they colligate

they abate,
they alate
and they transubstantiate.

13 *(one voice, probably male)*

There are days when I am nothing more than a kick,
purely and simply a kick.

Is there a motor scooter speeding past?

Goal! ...

in through a fifth-floor window.

Is there a baldy hanging around?

There he goes,

sailing through the air until he's impaled on
some lightning rod.

An automobile slams on its brakes to

pull up at the curb?

With one good kick it's installed in some garret.

To hell with pharmacists' flasks,

electrical lights and such,

numbers on the doors in the street!

When I begin to kick, it's useless to try to restrain me.

I need to tear down the cornices,

the pool halls, the street cars.

I need to get in ---

by kicks ---

the shop windows and take out ---

by kicks ---

all the mannequins into the street.

I can't rest,
or be happy,
until I have thoroughly demolished those
monuments to sanitation, the public urinals.

Nothing contents me so much as the crash,
induced by a kick,
of gasometers, of electric arcs.

I would rather die than renounce the act of
making street lamps describe trajectories like
skyrockets and plummet, legs upmost,
into the outstretched arms of the trees in
the municipal park.

A swift kick to firemen,
to artificial flowers,
to bicarbonate of soda.

A swift kick to water reservoirs,
to pregnant women,
to test tubes.

Family dissolved by a single kick;
consumer cooperatives;
shoe factories;
people who couldn't get insurance,
who couldn't be bothered to
change the water for the olives ...
or for the tiny goldfish ...

14 *(for two voices, one elderly female and one male ... because of "cravat")*

(voice 1, male)

My grandmother ---
who wasn't one-eyed ---
used to tell me:

(voice 2, female)

Women give you too much trouble
or they're not worth the effort.

People your dreams with those you like,
and they'll be yours while you sleep!

Don't floss your teeth with pubic hair.
Shun, as much as possible, venereal diseases,
but if you must choose between a
prize for virtue or
one for syphilis,
don't hesitate an instant:
mercury isn't half as heavy as abstinence!

When somebody's buttocks are smiling at you,
keep it under your hat.

Remember that you'll never find a better place to
put your tongue than in your very own pocket,
and that a cock in hand is worth two in the bush.

(voice 1)

But my grandmother was fond of contradicting herself and,
after asking me to help her find the eyeglasses that
were propped on her wrinkled forehead,
she would add in her daguerreotype voice:

(voice 2)

Life ---
and I say this from experience ---
is one long imbrutishment.

This much must be already obvious from the state
and the style in which you find
your poor grandmother.

I don't know how I'd go on if it weren't
for the hope of seeing things a little better after death!

Habit encrusts us daily,
plastering spider webs over our eyes.

Little by little,
syntax and the dictionary begin to confine us,
and though mosquitoes blow
their horns as they fly about,
it's a bit of a stretch to call them archangels.

When an aunt takes us on a visit,
we greet the whole world,
but we're ashamed to
extend our hand to mister cat and,
later on,
should we feel the urge to travel,
we buy tickets at a steamship agency,
rather than metamorphose an armchair
into a transatlantic liner.

By that ---
though at this point you probably think me
a senile old bat ---
I mean to say,
and I will never tire of repeating,
that you must not renounce anything,
including your right to renunciation.

An aching molar,
urban statistics,
the proper use of sawdust,
wood-chips and other discards can
afford us an unsuspected pleasure.

Open your arms and
don't look down on the clarinet or
faulty handwriting.

Confect a new virginity ever five minutes
and follow these counsels as if they were engraved in stone,
yet,
though experience is a sickness offering
little danger of contagion,
you must not expose yourself to
the influence of others,
and that includes your own shadow.

Imitation has prostituted everything,
right down to the pin in your cravat!"

15 *(for one voice male or female)*

He commanded his slaves to spit
on his forehead and,
dangling from the feet of a stork,
abandoned his customs and
sandalwood coffers.

But how could he have known that perfume can
leave a bitter taste on the tongue?

How could he have known that the solitude of asceticism
is filled with naked women,
and that all knowledge is humbled before
the biomechanics of a mosquito?

During his seclusion in the desert,
his navel succeeded in representing the
better part of the universe.

There even the spiders carry crosses on their back to
preserve themselves from foraging succubi.

There he became intimate with phantoms who
dash about on stilts through all eternity and
with cacti exhibiting the quirks of scarecrows,
but despite holding consultations with the Devil and
with the Lord he could not discover
a single new virtue or a single new vice.

Did his fasting and abstinence from
all concupiscence permit him to
savor the feverish adulation that is everywhere
accompanied by a miasma of submission and grief?

Preceded by a breeze that cuts a
swath through the filth of the roadway,
he passed before the astonished populace,
laden with boredom and parasites.

His presence ripened the grain and
brought the harvest to fruition.

The mere touch of his hands revived virility and
his glance instilled in prostitutes the
rustic tenderness of quails.

How many times his words fell on
the multitude with the mildness of rain calming the ocean!

With a phosphorescent splendor shining
around his bald pate and
with thousands of bees lodged in the hair of his chest,
he appeared simultaneously in different places,
each time with a disdain ever more
conscious of the pointlessness of all that exists.

His perfection became as repugnant to him as
taking a bath or swallowing caviar.

He no longer found voluptuous pleasure in taking his siesta or
in savoring the backwaters incarnated
as a caiman.

He derived not the slightest comfort from
the fact that lepers waited
for him so as to embrace his shadow,
nor that the stars stopped
twinkling when confronted by the
size of his tenderness and his beard.

One afternoon,
at a bend in some road,
he decided to stop moving for all eternity.

In vain the pilgrims flock from everywhere to
his sermons and oblations.

In vain they persist,
in the face of his indifference,
in performing the rites of the cabala and
in acts of mortification.

Neither their self-abasements nor
their ticklings succeed in
drawing from him so much as a yawn,
and the scare intensifies as a spreading
green scum covers his extremities and
his modesty,
and his body is transformed,
little by little,
into one of those clods that
embeds itself in the road so
as to hatch worms and slime.

16 *(one male voice)*

Some have a taste for mountain climbing.
Others like to play dominoes.
For me, nothing compares with transmigration.

While others spend their lives pulling
a rope or pounding a tabletop,
I spend my time transmigrating from
one body to another,
and I never tire of the process.

Up at the crack of day,
I install myself in a eucalyptus tree to
inhale the morning breeze.

I take a mineral siesta inside the first boulder I happen across,
and before going to bed I'm thinking of
the night and its chimneys with the spirit of a cat.

How delicious it is to metamorphose into a bumblebee,
so as to sniff up the pollen of the roses!

What voluptuousness to be one with the soil,
so as to feel the penetrations of the tubercles and roots,
and the percolations of a latent life that fecundate ...
and tickle us.

To appreciate ham,
isn't it indispensable to be a pig?

Can he who has not transformed himself into
a horse know the simple pleasure of
ruminating in a pasture or
fully grasp what it means to "horse around?"

Possessing a virgin is very different from
experiencing the sensations of a virgin while
she is being possessed,
and it's one thing to look
at the ocean while standing on the shore,
another to see it through the eyes of a crab.

That is why I love to thrust myself into foreign existences,
to live out their hopes and dreams,
their moods and humors,
fair or foul,
their bodily secretions.

That is why I love to graze on the pampas at twilight in
the person of a cow,
feeling the gravity and the foliage with
a brain the size of a walnut or chestnut,
or to squat in an open meadow singing
to the stars with the voice of a toad.

Ah, the enchantment of having been a camel,
an apple, or a carrot,
and the satisfaction of fathoming the indolence of
still waters ... and of chameleons!

To think that, during their entire existence,
the majority of men have never even once been a woman!

How is it possible for them not to be bored
with their appetites,
their spasm, and not long to experience,
from time to time,
those of cockroaches ...
or of the honeysuckle vine?

Though I have put myself, many times,
in the brain of an imbecile,
I have never understood how anyone could live,
perpetually,
with the same skeleton and the same sex.

When life is exclusively human ---
all too human ---
can the workings of the mind result
in anything except an infirmity more grandiose
and tedious than any other?

I, for one,
am certain that I wouldn't have been able to
stand such a life without this aptitude for evasion that
permits me to transfer myself to wherever I am not;
to be an ant, a giraffe,
to lay an egg and,
what's still more important,
to bump into myself at the very moment I
have forgotten, almost completely,
my own existence.

17 *(one male voice)*

She was squishing me between her flattened arms and adhering to my body with the violent viscosity of a mollusk.

A sticky secretion began to envelope me,
little by little,
until it succeeded in immobilizing me.

From each of her pores oozed a
sort of claw that perforated my skin.

Her breasts began to boil.

A phosphorescent exudation illuminated her neck,
her hips, until even her sex ---
full of spines and tentacles ---
encrusted my own sex and precipitated me into
a series of exasperating spasms.

It was useless spitting on her eyelids or
into the cavities of her nose.

It was useless screaming my hate and contempt.

Until the last drop of sperm slid away from my nape,
boring through my spine like a globule of melted sealing wax,
her gums continued to slurp at my desperation;
and before abandoning me she left her
millions of claws embedded in my flesh,
and I had no other recourse than
to spend the night pulling them out with
a pair of pincers and splashing a drop of iodine
in each of the wounds ...

Some party,
being a sleeper who is the private
hunting preserve for the sport of a succubus!

18 *(one male or female voice)*

Weep living tears!

Weep gushers!

Weep your guts out!

Weep dreams!

Weep before portals and at ports of entry!

Weep in fellowship!

Weep in yellow!

Open the locks and canals of tears!

Let us soak our shirts, our souls!

Inundate the sidewalks and the boulevards,
and bear us along safely on the flood!

Assist in anthropology courses, weeping!

Celebrate relatives' birthdays, weeping!

Walk across Africa, weeping!

Weep like a caiman, like a crocodile ...

especially if it's true that caimans and
crocodiles have no real tears in them.

Weep anything, but weep well.

Weep with your nose, with your knees!

Weep through your navel,
through your mouth!

Weep of love, of hate, of happiness!
Weep in your frock, from flatus, from frailty!
Weep impromptu, weep from memory!

Weep throughout the insomniac night and
throughout the livelong day!

19 (one voice, either)

So what if pulleys have eaten up thousands
and thousands of little fingers,
and still are not satisfied?

So what if sewing machines threaten to stitch up
our slightest gaps and fissures?

So what if the depravity of globes should
lead to the degradation of geometry?

It's disturbing enough ---
without a doubt ---
to consider that there exists
not a hectare of the earth's surface that
doesn't conceal four dozen cadavers;
but a big jump to think of oneself as
no more than a carcass of microbes ...
and to have no other aspiration than
to receive the title of skull ...

Our daily routine might be regarded as
a modest manifestation of pure absurdity,
through which God ---
reincarnated as some low-grade molar-puller ---
obligates us to place all our faith in toothpicks,
but life, for all that,
will never stop being a genuine miracle.

What do we care if cadavers decompose faster than automobiles?

What do we care if entire families ---

full of young ladies! ---

succumb from their excessive

fondness for wild mushrooms?

Doesn't the mere fact that we have a liver

and two kidneys offer ample justification

for spending our days applauding ourselves

and our lives?

Do we have to do anything but open our eyes to

be convinced that reality is, in reality,

the most authentic of miracles?

For those whose senses are properly attuned,

the most insignificant events ---

a woman who delays,

a dog who sniffs at a wall ---

will result in something so ineffable ...

it's as if a hidden universe of accumulated coincidences

and circumstances had ordained it ---

so that even in the presence of

so slight a spectacle as that of two flies alighting and

performing the act of

reproduction on a bald head,

one would have the impermeability of a crocodile

not to experience a veritable paroxysm of admiration.

Hence that love,
that tremendous gratitude for life that I feel,
those constant cravings to lap it up,
those impulses to prostrate myself before everything ...
before equestrian statues,
before garbage cans ...

Hence that bouncing-ball optimism that
makes me laugh till I scream at
the skeletons of bicycles,
at the lemons attacking my liver;
hence that happiness that incites me to
rebound from every wall,
from every idea,
to go running --- naked! ---
through the outskirts of town to
tickle the gasometers ...
the gravestones ...

Days, entire weeks,
go by in which nothing disturbs me,
not even the suspicion that women might be born
with taxi-cab meters between their breasts.

Moments of such fervor, of such enthusiasm,
that I find God everywhere, as I turn a corner,
in the drawers of my nightstand,
between the pages of books;
moments in which, despite all efforts to control myself,
I kneel in the middle of the street and
shout in a voice virginal and ancient:
"Long live sperm ...
though I perish!"

20 *(one voice, probably male)*

Often I go to visit a relative who lives outside of town.

While passing through one of the stations ---
it certainly did not happen by chance! ---
the train jumped over the platform,
demolished the baggage,
wiped out the ticket office and
the snack shop.

The cars stacked up one on top of the other.
The boxcar coupled onto the locomotive.
There were arms and legs everywhere:
under the seats,
along the tracks,
up in the nets for the luggage.

Of my compartment all the remains is
a splinter from the door.

I shove to one side the cadavers that surround me.

I straighten my tie and step outside,
as cheerful as you please,
without a wrinkle in my trousers or in my smile.

Although I foresee everything that will happen,
I have embarked on more than one such journey in
the hope that my premonitions will prove mistaken ...

The passengers were the same as always.

There was the adulterous husband with his pious,
patronizing smile.

There was the young lady whose charms are priced
in direct proportion to your distance from the coast.

There was the seal woman,
the tuna woman;
the manufacturer of rubber goods leaning
on the guard rail and contemplating the
immensity of the ocean,
which seems to inspire him only with
the thought of spitting on it.

On the third day of the voyage there was heard ---
in the middle of the night! ---
a metallic, intestinal screech.

Half-naked women!
Men in their nightshirts!
Tears!
Prayers!
Screams!

As the passengers strangled
one another clawing their way to the lifeboats,
I managed to reach in inflatable raft,
dove under its tarpaulin cover and,
already in the sea, surveyed ---
with the impassiveness of a cork ---
the unfolding spectacle.

It was a horrible sight!
The ship pitched, shuddered,
nosed under at the prow and
slipped beneath the waves.

Did I have to convince myself one more time that
I was the only survivor?

So as to be sure,
I inspected the site of the shipwreck.

Here was a lifesaver, a wicker chair ...
there a school of sharks, a bobbing cadaver ...

I calculated the distance,
set a course and,
after beating all world records, entered,
on the eighth day,
the port of disembarkation.

My friends, those who knew how many
similar debacles I had been spared before,
surmised at first that what had happened was a simple accident,
but, having to admit that these accidents happen so often,
to the point of seeming routine,
finally had to treat it as a
case of authentic predestination.

Just as there are men whose presence
exerts an unerring abortive efficacy,
my special faculty is for provoking accidents at every turn,
for helping along unforeseen calamity and
upsetting the unstable equilibrium on
which all existence depends.

With what anguish,
with what anxiety did I confront, in those first days,
this propensity for cataclysm! ...

Life gets complicated when it trips over wreckage at every step! ...

But the force of habit is invincible ...

Without noticing,
one eventually becomes accustomed to living among
disintegrating cadavers and shattered glass,
even to the point of discovering the
enchantment of floods,
the delights of structural collapses, and soon
one feels that life acquires color only in
the midst of desolation and disaster.

Note that our mere appearance on the scene is enough
to cause caryatids to weary of holding up
public edifices and thus to cause the downfall ---
among their crumbling columns of figures,
among their portfolios ---
of hundreds of moneylenders,
who feed on the body politic ...
and on garbanzo beans!

Learn to relish ---
as if they were delicious plates of boiled maize ---
the tremblors that fill us with awe,
earthquakes in which bathtubs sprinkle from
the eighth floor while dozens of salesgirls are
trapped and perish in the elevators,
and though blond are still called Esther!

Who can deny that before the magnificence of
such spectacles mountain landscapes lose all their appeal,
even if they are better shaped than the buttocks of
the Venus de Milo?

The exoticism of moths or mastodons,
the rites of masonry or mastication ---
at least as far as I'm concerned ---
hold not the slightest interest.

I need pulverized skeletons,
railroad decapitations,
unidentifiable corpses drawn-and-quartered,
and so great is my love for the spectacular that
the day on which it doesn't produce in me
a short circuit,
I will expire from sheer disillusionment.

Under such conditions,
my company would be as uncertain as
uncertain can be.

Am I to blame if I prefer
conflagrations to third-grade school-girls?

Although most men satisfy themselves with
musing on their dreams and
waking with the submissiveness of a cuckold,
he who has pernoctated among vagabond cadavers will
comprehend that the rest seems
so much molasses,
nothing but molasses.

I am ---
and what can I do? ---
a catastrophic man,
and I cannot sleep unless I can hear the rumblings
above my bed of the bodies and the belongings of
those living on the floors above,
and I'm not interested in any woman,
if I haven't already made this clear,
unless, as she lies outstretched in my arms,
she sets herself on fire in a blazing conflagration in
which she is carbonized to ash ...
poor thing.

21 *(for one voice)*

May noises bore into your teeth like
a dentist's drill,
and may memory fill you with rust,
broken words and the stench of decay.

May a spider's foot sprout from each of your pores,
may you find nourishment only in packs of worn cards and
may sleep reduce you, like a steam roller,
to the thickness of your photograph.

When you step into the street,
may even the lampposts dog your heels,
may an irresistible fanaticism oblige you to
prostrate yourself before every garbage pail and
may all the inhabitants of the city
mistake you for a urinal.

When you want to say "My love,"
may you say "fried fish";
may your own hands try to strangle you at
every turn,
and every time you go to flick away a cigarette,
may it be you who is hurled into the spittoon.

May your wife deceive you even with the mailboxes;
when she snuggles next to you,
may she metamorphose into a blood-sucking leech and,
after giving birth to a crow,
may she bring forth a monkey wrench.

May your family amuse itself deforming
your bone structure,
so that mirrors.
looking at you,
commit suicide out of sheer repugnance;
may your only entertainment consist
of installing yourself in the waiting rooms of dentists,
disguised as a crocodile,
and may you fall so passionately in love
with a toolbox that you can't desist,
even for an instant, from licking its clasp.

22 *(one male voice)*

Women vampires are less dangerous than women with a prehensile sex.

For centuries,
we have known various methods for protecting ourselves against the former.

It is known, for example,
that a rubdown with turpentine after a bath will,
in the majority of cases,
immunize us; this is because
the only thing women vampires like about us is
the maritime taste of our blood ---
that remnant that perdures in us from
the epochs when we were sharks or crabs.

The impossibility of their being able to
sink their lancet into us in silence reduces,
however, the risk of an unforeseen attack.

As soon as we hear them coming we play dead because,
after sniffing us and confirming
that we are not moving,
they hover for a moment and leave us alone.

Against women with a prehensile sex,
on the other hand,
almost all forms of defense prove ineffective.

No doubt prickly underpants and certain other preventatives can offer their advantages, but the violence of the sling with which their sex lashes out at us rarely gives us time to use them; before we notice their presence, they hurl us into a roller-coaster ride of interminable spasms, and our only remedy is to resign ourselves to months of immobility, if we hope to recover the kilos we have lost in an instant.

Nevertheless, among the creations of sexuality's inventory, those already mentioned are the least dreadful.

Much greater dangers, indisputably, proceed from electric women, for one simple reason: electric women operate at a distance.

Undetectably, across time and space, they charge us up like a battery, until suddenly we enter into such intimate contact with them that we find ourselves sharing the same currents and hosting the same parasites.

It's useless to isolate ourselves like hermits or pianos.

Asbestos pants and testicular lightning rods
afford zero protection.

Our flesh, little by little,
acquires magnetic properties.

The thumbtacks,
pin and bottle caps that
perforate our epidermis make us
kind with those African fetishes pierced with
pieces of rusted iron.

Progressively, the high-tension discharges
putting our nerves to the test galvanize us
from the tops of our skulls to
the tips of our toes.

Hundreds of sparks escape from
our pores every instant,
obliging us to live in nakedness.

All the way up to that little-contemplated day,
when the woman who has been electrifying us
intensifies her sexual discharges to such
a degree that she ends up electrocuting us
in a spluttering spasm of disruptions,
disconnections and fizzling
short circuits.

23 *(one voice, probably male)*

One can contest my ornithologic erudition and
the efficacy of my chess openings.

It never fails that some dolt will deny the
astronomical accuracy of my horoscopes.

But on one ---
and that's a fact! ---
will ever take it into his head to doubt,
even for an instant,
my perfect, my absolute solidarity.

A colony of microbes
has lodged itself in some young lady's lungs?
I am in solidarity with
the microbes, the lungs and
the young lady.

It occurs to a student to wait for
a street car inside a woman's clothes closet?
I am in solidarity with the closet,
the woman, the street car,
the student and the wait.

At all hours of the night,
on national holidays,
on the anniversary of the discovery of America,
I am disposed to solidarize with whatever may be,
a victim of my universal solidarity.

It is useless, completely useless,
for me to resist.

Solidarity is already a reflex in me,
something as unconscious as the dilation of my pupils.

If, for a hundredth of a second,
I came to desolidarize myself from
my solidarity,
in the hundredth of a second that followed
I would succumb to a veritable maelstrom
of solidarity.

I am in solidarity with the waves without sails ...
without hope.

In solidarity with the shipwreck of whale-calf senoras,
with the sharks in tuxedos who gobble up
their bellies and their handbags.

In solidarity with the handbags,
the whale calves and the tuxedos.

In solidarity with the servants and
the rats that move through the subsoil,
along with abortions and wilted flowers.

In solidarity with automobiles,
with decomposing cadavers,
with telephonic communications cut short at
the same time as pearl chokers and hangman's nooses.

In solidarity with the skeletons that
multiply almost as fast as personal files,
with stomachs that ingest tons of sardines and
bicarbonate of soda,
swollen like glutted reservoirs and
warehouses groaning with lost objects.

In solidarity with postal workers,
wet nurses,
colonels, pedicurists and
contrabandists.

I am in solidarity by dint of predestination and
by dutiful vocation.

In solidarity by virtue of atavism,
by virtue of convention.

In solidarity in perpetuity.
In solidarity with the insolidarious and
and in solidarity with my own solidarity.

24 *(one voice)*

On the 31st of February, at 9:15 p.m.,
all the inhabitants of the city became
convinced that death was inescapable.

This evidence,
having become the focal point of everyone's attention,
took on the life of a spider in
the folds of our circumvolutions,
weaving its web in every consciousness,
boring into our brains until it soaked them up
like a sponge.

From that moment on,
the faintest associations with the idea of death
erupted with such violence that
it was enough to find oneself opening
a can of sardines, for example,
to be immediately reminded of the lining of a coffin;
or,
fixing one's attention on the
stones of a sidewalk,
to discover their kinship with the
tombstones at the graveyard.

Amid enormous consternation,
it was determined that whitewashed facades had
a color and composition identical to that of bones,
and that it was practically impossible to climb into
a bathtub without assuming
the posture used in a casket,
so that no one could ensepulcher himself
between the sheets at night without
thinking about how the creases resembled
those of a shroud.

The heart,
with its isochronous and deep-seated rhythm,
evoked the most funebrial ideas of all,
as if the organ that
symbolizes and nourishes life had
the power only to irrigate
suggestions of death.

Hearing its tick-tock through the pillow,
who could help but mourn the life that
was passing away second by second,
listening to its steady march as if it were
the echo of steps trudging towards the tomb,
or,
what is even worse,
as if it were the pounding,
from the bottom of one's own entrails,
of a heavy brass ring knocking at death's door?

The urgent need to be free of this obsession with
the mortuarial drove the citizens to seek refuge ---
each according to his or her personal quirks ---
in mysticism or licentiousness.

Churches, bordellos,
inns and sacristies filled with people.

The multitudes prayed and fornicated on the streetcars,
in the public passageways,
in the middle of the street ...

Drunken with supplications or hard liquor,
they abused life,
squeezing it dry as if it were a lemon,
but then a gust of weariness extinguished forever
this flash fire of piety and vice.

The excesses of libertinage and devotion lasted
long enough, however,
for bodies to waste away and skeletons to
assume a greater prominence with each passing day.

A person had only to put his hands up to a light bulb to
learn the most intimate details of his anatomy,
since he not only had the benefit of X-ray vision,
but also flesh itself became more and more translucent,
as if the bones,
tired of remaining in darkness,
insisted on coming out and taking the sun.

The most elegant women ---
among other things ---
launched the fashion of trailing enormous trains
of crepe and,
not content with riding around in
hearses first-class,
decked themselves out like
the deceased so as to receive visitors on
their own catafalques,
ringed by hundreds of candles
and wreaths of immortelle.

Vainly the citizens organized pilgrimages,
kermesses, popular festivals.

Attempting to uplift the mood of the city,
musicians hired in the neighborhoods played "Charlestons,"
but as though they were funeral marches,
and couples couldn't take a whirl without
their movements acquiring the sinister rigidity
of a *dance macabre*.

Even inspirational speakers specializing
in extolling the sensuality of life proved
to be no help at all,
not only because their most practiced topics acquired
a cadaverous frigidity between their lips,
but also because the audience left off
its indifference only long enough to shout at them:
"Death to this resurrected verbomaniac!
To the tombs with this garrulous cadaver!"

How could this propensity for the funereal,
for the skeletal,
fail to instigate,
sooner or later,
a veritable epidemic of suicides?

In this pursuit, at least,
the populace demonstrated a vitality and
an inventiveness that were downright admirable.

There were suicides of every variety,
for every taste;
collective suicides,
serial suicides,
suicides wholesale and *en masse*.

Anonymous societies of suicides were founded
as well as societies of suicides anonymous.

They opened preparatory schools for suicide,
with faculties boasting the title of
"the perfect suicide."

Festivals, banquets and
masked balls for dying were given.

The spirit of competition made everyone ingenious in
coming up with an original, unedited suicide.

One in particular involved the ideal family ---
a family better organized than an "Innovation" trunk ---
who directed that they be buried alive in
a casket that accommodated,
in complete comfort,
the four generations making up the family line.

Eight hundred suicides wearing Lazarus costumes
plunged into the asphalt from
the twentieth floor of one of the most prominent
buildings in the city.

A "dandy," after transforming the
inside of his car into a coffin,
sped into the cemetery at 100 mph,
pulled up to the grave of his sweetheart and
shot himself four times in the head.

Public dismay was too intense for this
outburst of annihilation and extermination to persist.

Pretty soon no one was capable of
draining a cup of strychnine anymore,
no one could slit his eyeballs with a Gillette razor.

An unspecified torpor benumbed the citizenry and
inhibited the hygienic precautions required
by certain functions of the organism.

Heaps of garbage were left to
pile up in the street,
transforming every corner into
a paradise for cockroaches.

Neglectful of the dignity that befits any cadaver,
people expired everywhere,
in the most degrading positions.

Armies of rats invaded homes that
gave off a whiff of the tomb.

Silence and pestilence strolled arm
in arm through the deserted streets,
and faced with the inertia of their owners ---
already putrefying ---
parrots succumbed with empty stomachs,
but with mouths full of curses and obscenities.

One morning,
the thousands and thousands of crows that
circled over the city ---
darkening it at the height of day ---
disbanded in the presence of a squadron of airplanes.

The planes were bound on a clean-up mission whose
implacable scientific rigor was
evident from the first moment.

Without getting too close,
so as to avoid the danger of contagion,
the planes fumigated the rooftops with
every type of disinfectant,
dropping bombs filled with vitamins,
aphrodisiac confetti and
little balloons inflated with optimism,
until a prolonged examination demonstrated the
futility of every prophylaxis,
since the population,
topping the world record for extinctions,
had been reduced to six or seven moribund hold-outs.

Only then,
after obtaining this evidence,
they ordered the destruction of the city,
and a downpour of grenades burned it up altogether
in a single flame,
reducing it to rubble and ashes,
making sure that the miasma of
the certainty of death would
spread no farther.