

IMPROVEMENT (DON LEAVES LINDA)

An Opera

BY ROBERT ASHLEY

Like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)* is an allegory for an individual's self-realization. The opera takes its imagery from the history of the Jews – beginning with their expulsion from Spain in 1492 and ending 500 years later in the United States.

SYNOPSIS

Scenes 1 – 7. Don leaves Linda at a roadside turnoff vista somewhere in the southwest. He returns the rental car and undergoes questioning at the Airline Ticket Counter. Linda gets a ride to town with the Unimportant Family and is taken to the same Airline Ticket Counter, where she answers the same questions from a different point of view. At home, finally, she pretends that she is someone else.

Scenes 8 – 12. On the flight home Linda meets the amazing Mr. Payne, who remembers everything, and who proposes marriage to her. After the proposal, which she declines, he takes Linda and her son, Junior, Jr., to supper at his mother's house. Junior, Jr. recalls that Mr. Payne tried to teach him golf (left-handed). Linda faces her life-dilemma (symbolically) in an encounter in an all-night delicatessen.

Scenes 13 – 16. Linda moves to the big city and comes up against public opinion in various forms. Everything seems to have a meaning that is hard to decipher. After a typical, big-city party, she and a companion, having a late coffee and discussing nutrition, are threatened by four drunken men. They are saved in the nick of time, but the experience is ominously unpleasant.

Scenes 17 – 23. Linda has almost completely adapted to her new life, but there are still problems of meaning. At a crucial moment she catches a fleeting glimpse of Don (much changed), who seems to recognize her, but "disappears" in front of her eyes. She decides not to think about this experience. Finally, playing bridge with friends, she reads them a letter from Junior, Jr. in his new (mysterious) job and goes over the high points of her life in memory.

— Robert Ashley, 1994

IMPROVEMENT (DON LEAVES LINDA)

Idea	EXPERIENCE
Arena	THEATER
Imagery	LANDSCAPE
Technique	COLLAGE (3-D effects)
Protagonist	LINDA "A sense of self satisfaction, given off, follows everything she does."
Style	ANSWERS Requiring an attitude of restrained exaggeration. Every point seems to portend more than can be justified.
Model	ALLEGORY "Also, as part of the nesting instinct she puts things on all of the chairs."
Subject	A PEOPLE
Example	THE JEWS
Reference	THE KABALA
Theme	IDENTITY
Code	1492

CAST - CHARACTERS

Linda	The Jews
Don	Spanishness
Now Eleanor	America
Junior, Jr.	The descendants of Jews and non-Jews (i.e., us)
Mr. George Payne	Giordano Bruno
Mr. Payne's mother	The Roman Catholic Church
Tap dancing	The Art of Memory
A car with a rumble seat	Integrated Philosophy
Left-handed golf	Cosmology (Bruno's)
The Narrator	Omniscience
The Airline Ticket Counter	The Inquisition
The Correspondences Text	Exploration
The Unimportant Family	The Star Chamber
The Indifference Text	The Affirmation
Back home ...	Some recanted
A moment (very late) ...	Exile
The big city	Assimilation
The Doctor	Analysis (Marxism, etc.)
The Good Life	Art
Trouble	Politics
A place in the country	Israel
Happiness, Prosperity ...	America 1952
The Office	The idea of an historic refuge (Holland)
The bridge game	Self-image
North	Berlin (style)
East	River Rouge (The Movement)
South	Campo Dei Fiori (history)
West	Atlantis: "as far back as you can go (on this system) ..."

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Prelude: (The Argument)
(The Narrator)

1	<u>UMMMMM</u>
2	<u>UMMMMM</u>
3	<u>UMMMMM</u>
4	<u>UMMMMM</u>
5	<u>UMMMMM</u>
6	<u>UMMMMM</u>
7	<u>UMMMMM</u>
8	<u>UMMMMM</u>
9	<u>UMMMMM</u>
10	To continue
11	I must explain
12	An idea that
13	I am inadequate
14	To communicate
15	In the music
16	In the settings
17	In the actions
18	In the intentions
19	Now Eleanor's idea
20	Conceived as if
21	In a flash of light
22	The offering of images is
23	A radical form of Judaism
24	Which has come to us
25	Unacknowledged
26	In the same form as
27	Protestantism
28	Modernism
29	Science
30	And Theater as we know it
31	Her idea explains
32	At least to her how
33	All of these things have come together
34	And differences have disappeared
35	For the sake of argument Don is Spain in 1492
36	And Linda is the Jews

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Scene One: "Sunset at the Turnoff" (Chorus)

37 DON LEAVES LINDA
38 LEAVES IS CERTAINLY THE WORD
39 THE PICTURE IS TAKEN AT SUNSET
40 TWO PEOPLE ARE ON THE HORIZON
41 A cynic might say where else could they be
42 THEY HAVE PARKED IN A TURN-OFF
43 A turn-off in this case means: picked for the view
44 COMFORT IS ADVERTISED
45 Comfort in this case means: separate facilities
46 ICE MELTS IN THE THERMOS
47 What a beautiful way to begin a story
48 SHE HAS JUST THOUGHT OF THE WORDS: A CASTLE
49 AT NIGHT HE DOESN'T SPEAK
50 A CAMERA CLICKS IN THE DISTANCE
51 A dog barks
52 THE MOMENT IS LOADED
53 THEY STOP HOLDING HANDS
54 THE JET TRACKS ARE FADING
55 THE DECISION IS MADE
56 SHE STEPS AWAY FROM THE SIGNAL
57 THE LIGHT HAS MOVED SLIGHTLY
58 THE BUILDING IS TOO SUBSTANTIAL
59 The door on the left is marked women
60 HE WALKS TOWARD THE CAR
61 IT STARTS ON THE KEY
62 A song on the radio finishes
63 HE DRIVES AWAY

64 -- REACHES THE AIRPORT FINALLY.
65 -- GOES TO THE COUNTER AND UNDERGOES
66 -- QUESTIONING. WONDERS WHY HE THINKS OF
67 -- HIMSELF AS CARLO. SUBVERSIVE.

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Scene Two: "The Airline Ticket Counter"

Don goes by the name of CARLO;

The Agent at The Airline Ticket Counter (Linda) is named CARLA.

- 68 Do you have a ticket?
 Yes.
- 69 May I see it please?
 Yes.
- 70 The ticket says that it was issued as one of two.
 Yes.
- 71 The ticket says that you came here with your wife.
 Yes.
- 72 Where is your wife?
 She is not here.
- 73 Why is she not here?
 She stayed behind.
- 74 Ordinarily we would not honor such a ticket.
 I understand.
- 75 But today is a special day.
 I know.
- 76 So we will honor the ticket.
 Thank you.
- 77 Do you have baggage?
 Yes.
- 78 You have more baggage than you are allowed.
 I have my wife's baggage and my own.
- 79 Why do you have your wife's baggage?
 She stayed behind.
- 80 Why did she stay behind?
 I left her behind.
- 81 Why did you leave her behind?
 I had to leave urgently.
- 82 What is the reason for such urgency?
 My reasons are my own.
- 83 Do you refuse to tell me the reason?
 No.
- 84 What is the reason?
 Another person.
- 85 Is that person a woman?
 Yes.
- 86 The ticket says that you have rented a car.
 Yes.

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- 87 Do you have the rented car to return at this time?
Yes.
- 88 The ticket says that you will return the car with your wife.
I know.
- 89 If your wife appears without the car, it is possible that her ticket will not be honored.
I understand.
- 90 What will happen to your wife, if her ticket is not honored?
I do not know.
- 91 Where is your wife now?
I do not know.
- 92 Does she have transportation to the Airline Ticket Counter?
I do not know.
- 93 Does she have resources other than the airline ticket?
I do not know.
- 94 Does she know where she is in relation to the Airline Ticket Office?
I do not know.
- 95 And she has neither baggage nor the rented car?
Yes.
- 96 This is a rather unusual situation.
I understand.
- 97 Where was you wife when you left her?
She was in the toilet at the turnoff.
- 98 She went into the toilet and you left her?
Yes.
- 99 You took her baggage and the rented car?
Yes.
- 100 You left urgently to meet another person?
Yes.
- 101 That person is a woman?
Yes.
- 102 Your wife will be angry and jealous.
No.
- 103 How is that possible?
--

Scene Three: "The Correspondences Text" (Don and Chorus)

- 104 As if the Commander had spoken sharply to them, they
105 Ground ... (LONG PAUSE) -- what is the word? -- "they

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106 Ground ..." (LONG PAUSE FOLLOWED BY EXTRAVAGANT GESTURE
107 TO SIGNIFY THE ABSENCE OF THE ADVERB) -- to a halt.
108 This simple sentence, with the hole in it,
109 occupied me for years. Nor have I found the solution, yet.
110 What is the word? "They ground..." (LONG PAUSE, THEN,
111 THE SAME GESTURE) -- "to a halt."
112 The word I need should symbolize the whole of the psychology
113 of the process or attitude of what is not -- I repeat,
114 not -- subservience, which is the way we see it
115 from the "outside", so to speak. Remember "as if".
116 "As if" the Commander had spoken sharply to them, etcetera.
117 In other words, "they", acting to all appearances in unison,
118 ground to a halt. And, for us, how is that unanimity
119 of purpose and action to be achieved, if not
120 in subservience? We have a special view of the world.
121 The roads, for instance, are understood.
122 They represent a unanimity of purpose that is understood,
123 because, in my view of things, they are unframed in time.
124 When did they begin and when did they end are questions
125 we have not asked ourselves, because --
126 ALTHOUGH, MAYBE THERE IS NO "BECAUSE",
127 HOWEVER, IMPOSSIBLE THAT MAY SEEM --
128 as accomplishments they are "on-going."
129 But architecture has its accomplishments "framed in time."
130 The great "accomplishments" of architecture are, finally,
131 "finished", they are "framed in time", and, because we have
132 no understanding of our schedule on a scale so vast,
133 the "accomplishments" of architecture are a mystery to us,
134 and we explain them to ourselves in simple words
135 of great significance, whose meanings we barely have
136 examined -- much less "understand."
137 There is a precise -- perhaps, even to the moment --
138 correspondence, in time measured,
139 between the Ziggurats at Ur, "stepped pyramids"
140 (THEIR "DATE", HOWEVER THAT IS DETERMINED),
141 to the gleaming, polished Pyramids at Giza
142 -- "CLOCKS", THEY THINK, FOR THE WHOLE WORLD --
143 and the "stepped pyramids", unnamed,
144 that are the accomplishments of the great Aztec Tribes,
145 to the World Trade Center at New York.
146 This is one example among many; but, then,
147 I don't have time to discuss this in detail;

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148 I mean, the correspondence.
149 This is certainly a puzzle; I mean, the precision
150 of these correspondences. And it is not to be explained
151 in stupid and arrogant concepts, such as
152 the concept of "subservience." As in:
153 "They were ordered to do it, and they did it. We made
154 them do it, and it is done." Boy, how stupid can you get?
155 The Ziggurats at Ur -- on what sustenance we have
156 not named -- and the great "Clocks" at Giza -- on garlic,
157 it is said (AND THAT MAKES SENSE TO ME, WHEN I EAT GARLIC)
158 -- and the great stepped pyramids thrown toward the sky
159 among the Aztecs -- on coca leaves, it is surmised
160 (AND, BOY, THAT MAKES SENSE TO ME, EVEN AT THIS DISTANCE) --
161 and the World Trade Center at New York -- on grain carbohydrates,
162 I assume -- are, obviously, the "will of the people."
163 Consider the stupidity of the concept of
164 "subservience" on a scale so vast and the concept
165 disappears, like the value of flesh and blood as
166 sustenance to a monumental task. Do you know what I mean?

Insert end of Scene Two.

167 Well, sort of. I get the idea that this is a subject that you are interested in.
That's one way of putting it.
168 Have a good trip -- Carlo.
Thank-you. (What?)

Scene Four: "The Ride to Town" (The Unimportant Family)

169 MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE TURNOFF,
170 LINDA IS OFFERED A RIDE TO TOWN.
171 SHE DOESN'T LIKE THE LOOK OF IT.
172 FOUR PEOPLE TOO MUCH ALIKE.
173 A TYPICAL TRAP. SHE ACCEPTS.
174 GO FOR IT, LINDA. GOOD LUCK.

175 Well, here's a cute little thing,
176 just came out of the toilet,
177 and she appears to be alone.
178 A maiden in distress.

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179 Madam, my name is unimportant, and this is my wife,
180 whose name is unimportant, and our two, lovely
181 children, whose names are unimportant.
182 We are the Unimportant Family,
183 but we are a family, nevertheless,
184 and that is our charm.
185 You appear to be alone, the victim of circumstances --
186 circumstances of your own creation,
187 according to one point of view,
188 or not, according to another -- and
189 we can offer you a ride to town.
190 You apparently have been deserted.
191 It happens all the time, really.
192 Especially here. This is the perfect place:
193 The desert, the lack of public telephones,
194 that cosmic feeling of our singular
195 relationship to God, and the feeling of
196 detachment from the things of the world.
197 They just drive away.
198 Sometimes one, sometimes the other.
199 Maybe it's no more than who has the keys
200 and, of course, that madness
201 that comes to each of us so suddenly.
202 We come here all the time.
203 We live in a nearby town with telephones,
204 radios, airplanes, the works,
205 and there, burdened with the "works",
206 we have a hard time seeing.
207 So, we come here all the time.
208 First, of course, the reason was the vista:
209 pale, purplish blues and pale violets
210 at sunset, the gleaming stars at midnight,
211 wild yellows reflected off the morning rocks,
212 and, at midday, the blast of whiteness.
213 That wore off, of course.
214 If you've seen one, you've seen them all.
215 Then, among all this stage-business,
216 we began to see the drama.
217 Finally, accustomed to the light,
218 we began to see the drama.
219 The children enjoy it. My wife packs the
220 picnic lunch. I clean up the van, which is

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221 what we call our vehicle, leaving room always
222 for the extra person, who, like yourself,
223 needs a ride to town, and we come here.
224 Probably, were we elsewhere, there would be opera,
225 or the theater, or the promenade --
226 I don't even know the words, except from books.
227 So, this is it. This is your life.
228 Excuse me for the little joke.
229 And we can offer you a ride to town.
230 It takes on the order of an hour.
231 Just time enough for the separation to
232 be accomplished, all things going
233 right, without embarrassment
234 to either party
235 I can tell, just from the look in your eye, that
236 you don't believe me -- that this happens
237 all the time. You are convinced of your
238 uniqueness. What has befallen you
239 has befallen you alone. Is this not true?
240 Let me tell you, you are wrong. Why, just
241 last week, we picked up a guy out here whose
242 head was three times the size of his body.
243 Where do they come from, the kids say.
244 Who do they call, when we drop them at the
245 airport, the wife says.
246 I say, don't ask. Believe in
247 God, and don't ask.
248 This attitude usually gets us to the airport,
249 and then we have our ice-cream cones
250 and go off separately to think it over.
251 Until the next time.
252 Do you believe in God? Of course not,
253 or you wouldn't be here.
254 People who believe in God don't
255 stand around looking at the vista --
256 that is to say, pretending they are
257 looking at the vista, and waiting
258 for the drama to unfold.
259 People who believe in God pray,
260 right? Pray constantly.
261 Take ten minutes off to eat a pizza.
262 Are you kidding?

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263 Ten minutes off to look at the sunset?
264 Are you kidding?
265 That's why you're here, seven paces from the toilet
266 under the golden sky --
267 see how it changes just at the edge to blue;
268 the rule of complementaries they say;
269 bullshit, I say; the largest part is
270 modulated gold, and just at the edge
271 there is blue; period --
272 and, if there is a God, prayer is sufficient.
273 That's why you're here, seven paces from the toilet
274 under the golden sky,
275 talking to a creep in whose name
276 the van owned in common law by
277 the Unimportant Family is registered --
278 because you don't believe in God,
279 else you would pray constantly,
280 and that would be sufficient.
281 This ride is uncomfortable, I know.
282 Try as I will to keep things up to date --
283 I mean the van, as we call it,
284 the stereo cassette player with its
285 four loudspeakers placed
286 around the enclosure,
287 each separately controlled for
288 ideal balance of the sound
289 among the passengers with the
290 sole exception that the ideal balance
291 does not include the possibility of
292 no sound at all for one passenger,
293 if any other passenger wants or
294 needs a sound,
295 the fuzzy seat covers washed almost
296 monthly by the wife, and the air-conditioner --
297 there is a certain wornness about it,
298 and this wornness makes the
299 passenger uncomfortable,
300 reminding him or her that this
301 event is probably not unique.
302 Notice that even the landscape itself
303 looks worn. I don't mean the road.
304 In my opinion they do

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305 pretty well at keeping up the road.
306 I mean the landscape and the
307 feeling that it gives you.
308 So many people have looked at it before.
309 So many people have felt these feelings.
310 And it is impossible to conceive,
311 is it not, that your feeling --
312 I mean, the feeling that you have now;
313 God knows, we cannot "possess"
314 feelings; that figure of speech
315 is just a convenience --
316 is yours uniquely or, to involve
317 time in the concept, yours alone.
318 So, here we are at the airport,
319 where we must part. Good luck trying to
320 use your ticket. We would help you
321 if we could, but probably
322 it would only make things worse.
323 So, we will leave you and have our ice-cream,
324 and you will leave us for whatever
325 your destination is, and,
326 God willing, we will meet again
327 under less dramatic circumstance.

328 REACHES THE AIRPORT, FINALLY.
329 GOES TO THE COUNTER AND UNDERGOES
330 QUESTIONING. WONDERS WHY SHE THINKS OF
331 HERSELF AS CARLA. SOUNDS LIKE A
332 NAME FOR A SPY. YOU'RE READING THE
333 PAPERS TOO MUCH, LINDA.

Scene Five: "The Airline Ticket Counter"

Linda goes by the name of CARLA;

The Agent at The Airline Ticket Counter (Don) is named CARLO.

334 Do you have a ticket?
 Yes
335 May I see it?
 Yes
336 The ticket says that it was issued as one of two.
 Yes.

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337 The ticket says that you came here with your husband.
 Yes.

338 Where is your husband?
 He is not here.

339 Why is he not here?
 He went ahead.

340 Ordinarily we would not honor such a ticket.
 I understand.

341 But today is a special day.
 I know.

342 So we will honor the ticket.
 Thank you.

343 Do you have baggage?
 No.

344 Where is your baggage?
 It is with my husband.

345 Why is it with your husband?
 Because he went ahead.

346 Why did he go ahead?
 In order to leave me behind.

347 Why did he leave you behind?
 He had to leave urgently.

348 What is the reason for such urgency?
 His reasons are his own.

349 Do you refuse to tell me the reason?
 No.

350 What is the reason?
 Another person.

351 Is that person a woman?
 Yes.

352 The ticket says that you have rented a car.
 Yes.

353 Do you have the rented car to return at this time?
 No.

354 Why do you not have the rented car to return?
 My husband returned it.

355 Do you know that as a certainty?
 No.

356 Why do you believe that he returned it?
 Because he went ahead.

357 If he has not returned the rented car, your ticket cannot be honored.
 I understand.

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358 Will you allow me to determine if the car has been returned?
Yes.
359 The car has been returned.
I know.
360 We will honor the ticket.
Thank you.
361 You have neither baggage nor the rented car.
Yes.
362 This is a rather unusual situation.
I know.
363 Where were you when your husband left?
I was in the toilet at the turn-off.
364 You went to the toilet building and your husband left you?
Yes.
365 He took your baggage and the rented car?
Yes.
366 He left urgently to meet another person?
Yes.
367 That person is a woman?
Yes.
368 You are angry and jealous.
No.
369 How is that possible?
--

Scene Six: "The Indifference Text" (Linda)

370 To all appearances I am complacent and indifferent.
371 That is, I appear to be complacent and indifferent.
372 And, in fact, I am complacent in that I am
373 indifferent to appearances. My apparent indifference
374 and my apparent complacency would seem to be
375 the result of my position in the social world.
376 I am well-fed. I am well-dressed. I am,
377 to all appearances, without need. No one would challenge
378 me that I do not understand the value of my resources,
379 that I should have undertaken actions that would result
380 in waste and make me a burden to society.
381 These outward manifestations, these appearances,
382 show nothing about my -- if I may use the word --

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383 spiritual or my intellectual well-being,
384 though commonly they are taken to do so.
385 Our common experience is that spiritual
386 or intellectual degeneration cannot take place
387 without outward manifestations. Our common
388 experience is that beggars on the street or
389 madmen who rant and tear their clothing
390 should not be approached except in acts of
391 defense of society. So, my indifference is
392 different from the indifference of the beggar or
393 the madman. My indifference is wedded to complacency,
394 and complacency is reassuring at all times,
395 signifying as it does, the stability and
396 reality of the things of this world.
397 Thus, you have honored my ticket, which certainly
398 you should not have had I appeared before you
399 as a beggar or as a madman.
400 The irony of the threatening aspect
401 of complacency is too complicated to
402 go into here, except to remark that
403 there is some connection between the threat and
404 the continuing illusion of stability and
405 reality, which illusion is so valuable to us all.
406 I have driven my husband from me by my
407 complacency and my indifference. The moment of
408 his departure, which was inevitable, is of
409 little consequence, except for the drama -- which
410 purports to teach us something. My husband
411 is embarked upon an adventure of the mind --
412 if I may use that word. Inevitably,
413 his partner in the adventure would be another woman --
414 to address the question that is most troubling to you --
415 else the adventure would not be, precisely, "of the
416 mind." He has gone to determine if there is
417 continuance apart from the continuance of things.
418 In my complacency I have but little respect
419 for the purpose of his adventure. My
420 attention is to the things of this world
421 and precisely to the order of things
422 -- to their social value apart
423 from immaterial continuance.
424 Another answer to your stupid question is

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425 that inevitably we had to part, for some
426 period of time, as the result of having
427 become more alike, more like each other.
428 Apparently, at some moment in the recent past
429 we crossed the threshold of tolerable
430 similarity. That that moment -- the moment of
431 crossing the threshold -- should come in a form
432 that seems dramatic to you, that
433 it should come while I am in a toilet in
434 the middle of a desert, is more acceptable to me,
435 more generous on his part, more friendly,
436 because it is clearer and, thus, more humorous,
437 more human than had it come hidden, ambiguous,
438 timid and without confidence in me.
439 He would never go out after dinner to buy a pack of
440 cigarettes and not return. His imagination is
441 bigger than that. But we crossed the threshold
442 and a solution to the difficulties of that
443 situation had to come about. He had come to be --
444 I speak, of course, from my singular "point of view"
445 (as people say). There are things we can never
446 understand, thoughts that we can never have --
447 too much like me, too much of me. Before,
448 it had been mysterious, exotic; he had a
449 language of his own, apart, leaving me
450 "free" -- if there is any meaning to that word --
451 free to see the world in him, free to learn,
452 free to possess the fact of what is termed
453 "experience", free of the presence of the mirror.
454 Gradually, then, he changed himself in my image.
455 He became me in many parts of himself, because
456 we are not strong enough to behave otherwise. He became
457 me, because I am a woman -- as I became him,
458 because he is a man -- and my particular womanness
459 in him got to be as unbearable to me
460 as, certainly, it is unbearable to him.
461 We all resent, I believe, imitations of ourselves.
462 I have heard, or I imagine I have heard, that
463 in other parts of the world -- among other peoples --
464 this is not true, that among some peoples of the world
465 imitation is not resented. I don't believe it.
466 That idea seems to me to be what the Viennese called

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467 “wishful thinking.” It hardly matters, does it? Our
468 case could be particular in the extreme and still
469 you and I, here at the ticket counter, would have come to
470 understand it for ourselves. No that’s not true. Were it
471 particular in the extreme I would be exiled from the
472 community. It’s not particular. It’s common. I came to
473 dislike the image of myself in him. How can we conceal our
474 feelings? Enchantment left. Separation grew in us, a
475 pact between us. It’s my feeling that I drove him out, in
476 order again to acquire facts from the material world,
477 which act of acquisition was blocked for me by his presence.

Insert end of Scene Five.

478 Will you see him again?
 Without a doubt.
479 Have a good trip -- Carla.
 Thank you. (What?)

Scene Seven: “Back home some days she pretends she’s someone else”
(Linda and Chorus)

480 (LINDA ON THE TELEPHONE)
481 Hello.
482 No.
483 I mean, no, it’s not she.
484 No.
485 No.
486 Wrong again.
487 No.
488 Well, it’s not exactly charming.
489 No.
490 Of course.
491 Yes.
492 Goodbye.

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493 BACK HOME
494 SOME DAYS
495 SHE PRETENDS
496 SHE'S SOMEONE
497 ELSE.
498
499 Hello.
500 No.
501 I mean, no, it's not she.
502 No.
503 No.
504 She hasn't been at this number in some time.
505 No.
506 I wish I could help you.
507 No.
508 Of course.
509 Yes.
510 Goodbye.

511 ON THE THIRD CALL SHE'S
512 TOLD THAT DON HAS BEEN SEEN
513 ON THE ROAD WITH ELEANOR.
514 AND TALK LOCALLY IS THAT THEY'RE
515 HEADED FOR MEXICO.
516 MORE OF THIS LATER.

517 Hello.
518 No.
519 Well, ...
520 Yes.
521 Yes.
522 Really.
523 No.
524 I can't say I'm exactly surprised.
525 No.
526 Of course.
527 Yes.
528 Goodbye.

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Scene Eight: "Finally, she starts seeing Mr. Payne, an Italian man, who tap dances."

(Mr. Payne, Linda and Chorus)

529 FINALLY, SHE STARTS SEEING

530 MR. GEORGE PAYNE

531 AN ITALIAN MAN

532 WHO TAP DANCES

533 (MR. PAYNE AND LINDA SPEAKING)

534 ---

535 No, George, there is your mother, my mother and birth control.

536 These are three reasons why we should not get married.

537 I have a car with a rumble seat. It is better than the car of your
538 brother-in-law. It is better than the car of your brother
539 who assures us that he is not interested in driving. It is better
540 than the car of your brother, who modestly allows that, for the time being
541 all things of his marriage are the property of his wife,
542 in order that her mother's future is secure. It is better
543 than the car of your brother, who runs around with the daughter
544 of the sofa-stuffing family, amazing as she is.
545 It is better than the car most people will ever ride in.

546 Another reason, George, is your background. Or
547 my background. We seem to see things so differently.

548 My family is Payne and, though I am sure they merely
549 changed it from meaning bread, because that's the way the Officer
550 saw it, still words would be useless, if
551 the sound were not the meaning, and so I live in Payne,
552 to make a silly joke, I am, as it were, inside of Payne,
553 and from that perspective I ask you to reconsider, to remember
554 that my origins suggest a certain skill in providing,
555 as in to provide, that a person would not be named bread
556 and have in him a characteristic inability to provide.

557 Another reason, George, is your name. There are customs
558 in my family about how men should be named.
559 George is practically unheard of. They would never
560 get it straight. Do you know what I mean?

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

561 As you know, all tap dancers are named George. It means
562 "light-hearted." In tap dancing one retraces. (Rehearses is
563 the word they use, but they are wrong, trapped in the first
564 stage or first test of memory; how many syllables
565 and for how long: immediately, ten minutes later, at the
566 end of the day, forever? No, the trick of memory, or the dance
567 of memory, as we say, meaning the same thing, is in the
568 positioning of the information. The dance of memory is just that,
569 and music is the rehearsal of that dance. Do you follow?)

570 You made a point or two that I could bear to hear again.

571 In tap dancing one retraces. That's why
572 we are so often seen looking down. The observer
573 thinks that we are looking down in order to keep things
574 right for the observer. To prevent error.
575 The observer has never seen what the dancer sees
576 looking down, or the observer wouldn't think that.
577 The world moves on the air of music. There's nothing
578 like it. It's the only thing we had before
579 automobiles as four-dimensional.

580 LINDA SEES THE
581 CONTENTS OF HER PURSE
582 IN RETROSPECT

Scene Nine: "The Contents of Her Purse" (Linda, Mr. Payne and Chorus)

583 This is the kind of talk
584 that got me through.
585 It is so full of something or other --
586 little injections of regret:
587 "amazing as she is"
588 "to make a silly joke"
589 "as it were"
590 "as in to provide"
591 "as you know"
592 "but they are wrong"
593 "as we say"
594 It is so ...

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

595 It is too big to have been thought out.
596 Detail upon detail.
597 Never repeating itself.
598 It agitates the air.
599 I heard it beside me, first –
600 THIS IS LINDA SPEAKING.
601 as the Airline Ticket Counter agent questioned me.
602 How can we conceal our feelings?
603 Enchantment left.
604 Separation grew in us.
605 I heard myself saying these things to a stranger.
606 I was almost in tears.
607 Then I heard him beside me,
608 speaking to me:
609 The Indifference Speech, naturally, doesn't impress
610 me at all. You hear that stuff all the time.
611 I couldn't believe it.
612 I was almost in tears.
613 And this guy had stopped to insult me.
614 RIGHT AT THE AIRLINE TICKET COUNTER.
615 I dropped my purse.
616 Everything came out.
617 And that was everything.
618 Everything else gone you know where.
619 And what's left scattered all over the terra-cotta.
620 And this guy is saying about my Indifference Speech,
621 You hear that stuff all the time.
622 And then he took me by the arm.
623 I was about to fall on my knees.
624 You know how women are made to act silly in all those
625 stupid films. I hadn't made a move.
626 I was waiting for my heart to break.
627 I saw myself scrambling around on the floor,
628 trying to pick up all that precious trash.
629 And then I felt his hand on my arm,
630 and the picture disappeared.
631 Everything that had gone wrong in my life up to that moment
632 disappeared. I lost the past of problems --
633 like some sort of royalty.
634 And then I watched the Airline Ticket Counter Agent come out
635 from behind the counter, right over the luggage scales,
636 clumsily, and start picking up my things.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

637 HE WAS NOT IN A GOOD MOOD.
638 He hadn't intended to do what he did.
639 But he found himself picking up my things,
640 and apologizing.
641 I had the feeling that Mr. Payne had just taken control of the
642 idea that I had projected with me in it
643 and erased it and come up with a new one that had the Airline
644 Ticket Counter Agent picking up my things.
645 This uncanny feeling came to me more than once, when
646 we were together. He would rearrange things,
647 as if in the power of his imagination. No, obviously --
648 or, I should say that now it's obvious, remembering that
649 experience of the intensity being directed,
650 of things being moved around, being arranged
651 according to some plan, it is obvious
652 what had happened, it is obvious why my things were
653 on the terra-cotta, it is obvious why I dropped
654 my purse -- he memorized the contents.
655 Why? I asked myself so many times.
656 Why did he need to know? Why, with his commanding presence,
657 was the theater of the "accident" required,
658 the drama of the tears that had to come inevitably?
659 Why not just make friends and ask?
660 OR, IN THE STYLE OF THE SECRET AGENT,
661 MAKE FRIENDS, AND, THEN AT THE RIGHT MOMENT,
662 OPEN THE PURSE AND STUDY.
663 Why involve so many unknowns? One hesitates to say,
664 in his case, imponderables.
665 Anyway, I learned this power of his only later.
666 First, there was the tangible magic of his
667 presence. We sat together on the plane.
668 Bravely, I had recovered poise.
669 This was just hours after
670 I had emerged from the moment of the parting
671 to look at the desert of the setting sun
672 alone.
673 When I told him this later,
674 when I told him what had happened to me,
675 and I was going on just about this way
676 and with these words,
677 he said, "It's always setting."
678 He knew everything. It was

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

679 as if he had memorized the contents of a vessel
680 that had in it all of ... experience.
681 We talked about everything. I thought the reason was mine.
682 I thought that having found him out --
683 a person who wanted to know everything
684 -- I had found a weakness. Why do we do that?
685 And so I decided to talk about -- everything.
686 I moved the conversation pointer
687 as fast as I could.
688 Overconfidence, they used to call it.
689 He brought this out in people.
690 The -- uhn -- predator
691 has the victim in sight. I wonder what
692 it would be like to play tennis with one of the great ones
693 -- who had decided to make the returns all playable.
694 We talked about everything,
695 and everything was there in place.
696 An Alexandrian library
697 for one person at a time.
698 MUST BE READ HERE. NO CHECKOUTS.
699 NO EXCEPTIONS. I got drunk on the abundance.
700 Ball bearings, no problem.
701 A history of ball bearings in a few sentences.
702 As if from scripture.
703 Electrical power, no problem.
704 Where the great dams are and who made them and what they do.
705 Ancient migrations, no problem.
706 Whence and where from the past in such
707 detail and with such understanding
708 that the past became indistinguishable,
709 magically, from the future.
710 And then we landed.
711 And I pretended I was headed --
712 home -- to something.
713 And then after a decent period
714 OF DAYS
715 OF WEEKS
716 OF MONTHS
717 WHATEVER,
718 he called, and
719 we dropped the pretense,
720 and --

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

721 We dropped the pretense.
722 And.
723 What happened then?
724 WHERE HAVE THOSE DAYS GONE?
725 I have forgotten and
726 he showed me how -- never to forget.
727 It began as a game between us.
728 Let me guess what's in your purse.
729 For everything I get right I get a kiss.
730 I'll bet a dozen, which is modular.
731 We made a picnic, the two of us
732 on a Sunday afternoon in the shade
733 of a box-elder near the river.
734 I asked him why we took
735 his precious Sunday afternoon of golf.
736 He said that we should marry.
737 I could learn to play golf. And we could
738 spend every Sunday afternoon together,
739 forever. I think he said,
740 "...THROUGH ETERNITY." I said I didn't think that
741 I could learn to play golf. He said,
742 "It's just like what's in your purse.
743 "It's the same thing. It needs
744 "going over now and then to make sure
745 "it's all there. That's the only reason
746 "we do it. The scale is different, but
747 "that's all. Every position
748 "over the whole course, every
749 "consideration, is knowable
750 "as a fact. On a certain
751 "Sunday we retrace a certain number,
752 "more or less. That collection
753 "is a fact -- a larger fact
754 "composed of smaller facts,
755 "and to play golf with enjoyment
756 "each larger fact
757 "and all of the smaller facts
758 "must be remembered
759 "as exact experiences
760 "in order that we don't
761 "wander around in uncertainty, as if
762 "the game were mostly chance, as if the

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

763 "responsibility were too big to bear, and -- "
764 If I knew more about the way we express things
765 to each other, maybe I could finally understand
766 and explain his -- "and -- "
767 "AND -- "
768 As if leaping from one star
769 to another. "and --
770 "finally the accumulation of exact
771 "experiences, remembered
772 "exactly, becomes wisdom,
773 "even before all of the infinite possibilities
774 "have been exhausted, and --
775 "you discover that the wisdom,
776 "as if a gift,
777 "is usable in other ways.
778 "You can use it in other places.
779 "To know every fact of golf
780 "in the experience of playing it
781 "is to know
782 "with the same certainty
783 "how people beget people, how the car
784 "with the rumble seat is made to run and
785 "what's in your purse, for instance."
786 I was a little frightened.
787 Did I dare suggest that he knew what was in my purse,
788 from the very beginning?
789 Then, it occurred to me,
790 finally --
791 I mean, finally, I got it,
792 and the fear went away --
793 that, if my purse had changed its contents
794 how many times
795 since the moment at the Airline Ticket Counter,
796 he would be betting kisses
797 ON THE PAST RECAPTURED
798 only in a snap shot memory.
799 So, the purse had fallen at the Airline
800 Ticket Counter, in order that we could
801 get to know each other quickly, and both of
802 us were at fault, finally,
803 for why it fell.
804 The golf course,

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

805 the contents of the purse
806 and the infinitely complicated
807 re-circling re-tracking
808 re-tracing but finally
809 finite series of points
810 on the route of the car with the rumble seat
811 indeed had a common pattern,
812 and to know one was to know them all,
813 in every moment of the ever-changing world.
814 AS LONG AS YOU HAVE A PLACE TO START.
815 Start at the Airline Ticket Counter.
816 Take a reading.
817 Compare it to the pattern.
818 And, then,
819 months later, you can bet
820 kisses that you know it all.
821 That evening, having
822 not played golf,
823 Mr. Payne took Junior, Jr.
824 and me to supper
825 at his mother's house.

826 THAT EVENING HAVING
827 NOT PLAYED GOLF
828 MR. PAYNE TOOK JUNIOR, JR.
829 AND LINDA TO SUPPER
830 AT HIS MOTHER'S HOUSE.
831 ---

Scene Ten: "Supper with Mr. Payne's Mother" (Mr. Payne's Mother/Linda and Chorus)

832 How is it that (SLOWLY TO MAKE THE WORDS
833 UNDERSTANDABLE) with the name of Payne
834 you serve pasta at every meal?

835 It is because we immigrated by the eastern route.
836 My child, full grown now, who has brought you here to supper,
837 and I, alone after his father's death, came in from the east.
838 Had we come in by the southern route, the meaning of the sound
839 -- due to the typically southern way with vowels --
840 translates, as they do at the southern entrance,

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

841 to Flat-Tire, as in Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and such.
842 What is your name? -- you give the sound -- The Officer
843 replies: You shall be called Flat-Tire. Next please.
844 But, Officer, Flat-Tire is so different from the meaning,
845 which is to provide. Please reconsider. The Officer replies:
846 You can keep the dash and pretend it's English.
847 We're not going to call you Payne, if that's what you want.
848 We don't like for our children to hear those sounds.
849 If you want to start over again, that's your business,
850 but you'll have to do it later, once you've settled.
851 If I get into that kind of thing here, nobody will get through.
852 Everybody trying to figure out what they want to be called, can you imagine?
853 It's Flat-Tire. That's the best I can do. Please.

854 She pauses. (SOTTO VOCE, LINDA) Offers pasta.

855 Mostly I am glad that we came in by the eastern route,
856 where Payne was allowed.
857 Only rarely I am not.
858 (UMMMMMM)

859 What is the reason
860 for serving pasta
861 at every meal?

862 After years of experience -- and this goes back to
863 times before my time or my mother's time,
864 I am not sure about the beginning,
865 probably it is lost in time -- it was discovered
866 that proper weight keeping finally
867 has to abandon all external measures.

868 (SOTTO VOCE, LINDA) followed by quick glance at Junior, Jr., who has
869 come along today, and who has come abruptly to attention,
870 almost as if anticipating where the argument is headed.

871 The first responsibility in eating is to measure
872 calorie value to the immediate future.
873 Allowing roughly five hours for sleep, the rest of the
874 day can be divided in to periods of three hours each.
875 The discovery that I mentioned is that three hours
876 is just about the longest average time that any of us can

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

877 look ahead. So, it is possible to figure out
878 how many calories will be needed for the next three hours,
879 and, since pasta is a constant measure,
880 approximately 300 calories per cup, with sauce,
881 eat no more than necessary.
882 The importance of pasta is the importance of a standard.
883 With training one can learn to know to within
884 ten calories how much one has eaten.
885 (UMMMMMM)

886 Is there an advantage to this
887 way of life in which pasta
888 is eaten at every meal?

889 As I said, it is the perfect diet. That is
890 important to us, because -- the habit of dancing
891 runs deeply in this family. And, finally, the
892 heroism of dancing in a heavy body is forgotten.
893 Of course, age and the dignity of age play a
894 part in this, too. One encourages tap dancing
895 up to a certain point. The reasons must be obvious.
896 Where to stop is a question of dignity. The sense of
897 the importance of a good family, the importance of
898 caution in one's behavior, comes from the need to
899 keep the image of dignity important in the family.

900 A quick glance at Mr. Payne, who is alternately
901 absorbed in thought -- and rigidly attentive.
902 I am reminded of a large cat. (SOTTO VOCE, LINDA)

903 Ballroom dancing can go on forever, of course.
904 One never tires of the gracefulness of abstinence.
905 Tap dancing, beyond a certain point, has too much of
906 self-gratification about it. Beyond a certain point,
907 tap dancing works against society in many ways.
908 Self-gratification is one: waste.
909 Nitrogen intoxication is another: uselessness.
910 Contagion, the social networks filled with ephemeral
911 information, is another: confusion. There are
912 many reasons. I prefer to think of the matter as closed.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

913 CLOSED IT IS.
914 NOW LET'S JUMP AHEAD IN TIME.
915 GIVE OURSELVES RELIEF FROM ALL THIS --
916 QUESTIONING.
917 IMAGINE JUNIOR, JR. YEARS LATER
918 (CHANGED HIS NAME, OF COURSE!)
919 IMAGINE HE'S THE PRESIDENT, JUST RETIRED, OF
920 SOME HUGE CORPORATION.
921 JUST RETIRED, HE REMINISCES.

Scene Eleven: "He tries to teach Junior, Jr. to play golf left handed"
(Junior, Jr., Mr. Payne and Chorus)

922 Distrust in me of foreign things
923 -- THIS IS JUNIOR, JR. SPEAKING --
924 made it impossible from the start.
925 I loved the two-toned shoes.
926 I loved the bag.
927 I loved the names,
928 the angles of the face plates,
929 the idea of the special purpose clubs
930 sheathed until the moments when they are
931 precisely needed. I loved it all, but...
932 THIS IS THE MEANING OF REGRET,
933 THE DISGUISED TONE OF
934 IMPATIENCE IN HIS VOICE.
935 We stand there in the quack grass,
936 untended front yard. Tries to teach me
937 how it get it off the ground at least.
938 I will not suddenly catch on and smack one
939 through the box-elders into the traffic.
940 AFRAID OF THE SUN, HE THINKS TO HIMSELF.
941 Too confident absolutely in himself,
942 the expensive sweaters, the two-toned shoes,
943 the dark hair swept back neat,
944 the smell of cigarettes, the knowledge that
945 tomorrow in the presence of the boys and girls,
946 in the presence of their mothers
947 he will dance again. HOW IT'S DONE.
948 Romantic place in town, waiting there,
949 paid for by the month by dancing.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

950 Too confident absolutely in himself,
951 dancing, a roadster with a rumble seat,
952 to think even for a moment that
953 distrust in me of foreign things
954 is a distrust of himself, not
955 fear of golf left-handed,
956 fear of free-lance living.
957 THIS IS THE MEANING OF REGRET.
958 They seek security, Mom and Dad,
959 seek it so that I do as a child
960 without knowing that I seek it, what I seek.
961 Boy child turned extremist,
962 barely a decade, recently abandoned,
963 as earnestly desires security
964 as a Jesuit, living wildly
965 in imagination only, within
966 strict secure limits of security,
967 encounters a man who lives
968 month to month by dancing.
969 Tap and ballroom dancing. His studio
970 a romantic place in town. ("The Arcade,
971 an enormous gallery, filled with people,
972 light filtered through the glass above,
973 two stories high, a block long,
974 without rain, perfect temperature forever
975 on stone pavements made beautiful with use.
976 A cathedral, secular, just big enough.
977 Royal chambers on the second floor.
978 Secret stairways, gold lettered windows,
979 locked doors. The studio itself,
980 vast hardwood, perfect in tongue and groove,
981 the likes of which, etcetera. The Arcade
982 builder, Worth, knew what he was up to.")
983 Now dancers every day there,
984 proxy children, mother vicarious,
985 except weekends. Saturday market.
986 Wild flowers. Fear of mushrooms.
987 Foreign things. From farmers,
988 onions for the married sister.
989 OH, GEORGE, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE.
990 Then, Sundays, left-handed golf,
991 The Country Club. Businessmen.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

992 Northern stock. This country needs
993 less dancing. Right-handed golf.
994 Credit God for good government.
995 Social Security enacted. Y'HAVE TO
996 PUT SOMETHING IN TO GET SOMETHING OUT.
997 Years later, evenings, I,
998 Junior, Jr., see him.
999 The drugstore with music.
1000 The bookrack, English self-taught.
1001 Well-dressed, of course. Stopped smoking.
1002 Sometimes he doesn't know me.
1003 Remembers, but doesn't know me.
1004 Elegantly cordial, when he does.
1005 I studied with this man one time.
1006 Tried to teach me golf left-handed.
1007 Tried to teach me living
1008 month-to-month by dancing. Instead,
1009 learned what I knew already. Love for
1010 good government. Social Security.
1011 He's only cordial. Little wonder.

1012 TO HONOR MR. PAYNE,
1013 WE'LL LET HIM DESCRIBE THE NEXT SCENE.
1014 MR. PAYNE, IT'S ALL YOURS.

1015 Well, let's just say it didn't
1016 work out. She danced away.
1017 I stopped calling. Sold the car.
1018 She likes loneliness. She will
1019 spend her days in loneliness.
1020 It's written.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Twelve: "A moment (very late) in an all-night delicatessen" (The Narrator and Linda)

1021 Abruptly we have moved ahead in time.
1022 She is not particularly older,
1023 but she is noticeably changed.
1024 The time is evening, very late.
1025 Whom she is talking to
1026 is out of sight. Hidden,
1027 but near. She speaks softly
1028 and with force. We watch.
1029 And they are watching.

1030 You don't hear me.
1031 I try to tell you.
1032 You don't listen.
1033 You couldn't understand,
1034 if you could hear me.
1035 This person's aunt.
1036 That person's brother.
1037 The girls at the office.
1038 That's it.
1039 It'll change.
1040 People say so.
1041 With eye contact.

1042 IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD.
1043 CHANGE IS GRADUAL.
1044 PROGRESS TO BE NOTICED SOON.

1045 What do I care?
1046 Look at the time.
1047 This is Linda speaking.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1048 Beyond her in the aisle
1049 four or five people
1050 secretly drunk,
1051 the joy of that moment
1052 when the alcohol takes over,
1053 notice she's distressed,
1054 beckon silently to her
1055 to leave with them. Oh,
1056 how we misunderstand.

End of Act I.

1057
1058
1059
1060

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Thirteen: The Big City (Now Eleanor and Chorus)

1061 (TACIT)
1062 THIS ACT
1063 SPEAKING GENERALLY
1064 IS ABOUT -- UHN --
1065 PUBLIC OPINION. BUT, OF COURSE,
1066 ONLY AS IF IN A DREAM.

1067 She gets a call from the city.
EVERYTHING HAS STARTED TO GO RIGHT.
1068 Stronger for what she's been through.
APPROACHING THE AGE OF PERFECTION.
1069 The future no longer a burden.
LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND.
1070 Hang no regrets in the closet.
BACK TO HIGH HEELS AND FRIENDS.
1071 Speak sharply if I disagree.
(UMMMMMM)
1072 About now the radio stations
START PLAYING A SONG WITH A MESSAGE.
1073 She is unsure of the moral
(When the words can be understood.)
1074 But the song has something for her in it.
THEMES OF MIGRATION AND CHANGE.
1075 A positive negative feeling.
NATURE CORRUPTED AND THRIVING.
1076 On irony, language and greed.
(UMMMMMM)

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1077 Here come Tarzan.
 Look at that suntan.
1078 He's a big swinger.

1079 He got a wife an'
 Her name Jane an'
1080 She's a humdinger.

1081 They got a son an'
 He name Boy an'
1082 He's a gunslinger

1083 Livin' in a tree an'
 Hopin' to be a
1084 Rock and roll singer

1085 HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.

1086 WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.

1087 ---

1088 One day here come
 Into that jungle
1089 A movie director.

1090 He see Tarzan
 Doin' his thing an'
1091 He quite affected.

1092 He say Tarzan
 Have a cigar, man.
1093 You been selected.

1094 You represent that
 One element that
1095 Can't be corrected.

1096 HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.

1097 WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1098 ---

1099 Tarzan and Jane sign
 Up with the man for
1100 Some compensation.

1101 Lock up the hut an'
 Wash up the boy an'
1102 Leave from the station.

1103 Takin' their thing to
 The world capital of
1104 Civilization.

1105 Hopin' to achieve, if
 You can believe self-
1106 Realization.

1107 HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.

1108 WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.

1109 ---

1110 Now Boy doin' fine.
 Got a thing goin'.
1111 He gone electric.

1112 Tarzan and Jane, man,
 They got a thing that's
1113 Very selective.

1114 Lotta fine clothes an'
 Three or four cars an'
1115 A private detective.

1116 To guard all the things that
 Tarzan regard as
1117 A social Corrective.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1118 HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.

1119 WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.

1120 ---

1121 Like all of the rest of us,
Tarzan and Jane sometime
1122 Feel sentimental.

1123 The pool is cool but
The flow is slow an'
1124 The drain's temperamental.

1125 The neighbors are animals,
Strange in their ways,
1126 Whose troubles are mental.

1127 Oh, bring it back, please,
The house in the trees an'
1128 The breeze sweet and gentle.

1129 HANGIN' AROUND WITH THE APES ALL DAY.

1130 WHAT A WAY TO RAISE A FA-MO-LY.

1131 ---

1132 The song stays on the air for some weeks, infecting
1133 Almost everyone. If it is not so good in
1134 The world capital of civilization, where is it good?
1135 Celebrities continue to die of disappointment.
1136 The very poor continue to die of hunger.
1137 The unrecognized continue to die of striving.
1138 And in the meantime, as if in a dream, the parties go on
1139 Almost nightly in the city. At a party one drinks cautiously,
1140 Avoids the room where the heavy smokers have gathered,
1141 Expresses for the record some degree of vulnerability
1142 In matters of health, habit and desire, tries to be helpful,
1143 Waits inconspicuously, exchanges dreams with strangers.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Fourteen: "The Doctor (All Things Rolled Into One)" (Linda and The Doctor)

1144 Last night I dreamed that --
(Just a moment, please.)

1145 I'm sorry. Last night I dreamed that -- this is a common dream for me.
1146 (A woman, recently hurt by circumstances, begins her dream
1147 with the insight that the dream, itself, which we have not
1148 experienced, remember, is a common dream for her.)
1149 I'm sorry. What I meant was that last night I dreamed as
1150 I ordinarily do, and I wanted you to know that the dream
1151 was a common one for me, which I thought you could
1152 not know unless I told you.
(Just a moment, please.)

1153 I'm sorry. I dreamed that I was standing in a beautiful
1154 meadow on an almost cloudless day. The meadow seemed to
1155 go on in soft rolling hills almost forever. It was covered
1156 with early summer flowers. The sun was shining.
(Just a moment, please.)

1157 I'm sorry. The sun was shining. I was alone. I was at peace with
1158 myself. It was a rare moment. It was without any foreboding.
1159 (The dream began in foreboding. To appreciate that the
1160 dream is commonplace even before the dream has begun
1161 is a version of foreboding.)
1162 I'm sorry. There was no foreboding. If I gave you that
1163 impression, it was a mistake. There was no foreboding.
1164 That is the part of the dream that I don't understand.
1165 The moment that is so memorable in the dream came with no
1166 foreboding. Unlike most of the moments in my life.
(Just a moment, please.)

1167 I'm sorry. This is hard for me to explain.
(Just a moment, please.)

1168 I'm sorry. What is hard to explain is that I was taken so much by
1169 surprise by what happened, and at the very same time it seemed so natural.
1170 It was surprising and natural at the same time.
(Just a moment, please.)

1171 I'm sorry. It was such a pleasure to be surprised.
1172 I had forgotten.
(A woman is shaken by the absolute rarity of her dream.)

1173 I'm sorry. I was standing in a vast meadow that was, at
1174 the same time, the front yard of my house. I had those
1175 feelings at the same time. I don't remember any details

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1176 from the dream that gave me the idea that the meadow was the
1177 front yard of my house, but the feeling of the identity
1178 was clear. And I remember it clearly even now.
1179 (The language of describing the dream describes the foreboding,
1180 intentionally or not. The memory of the dream has no sense
1181 of foreboding. The language describes an image with two
1182 identities. The memory of the dream reconciles the two.)
1183 I'm sorry. Neither of those things seemed important to me
1184 compared to the power the dream had over me.
(Just a moment, please.)
1185 I'm sorry. As I was standing in the meadow, an airplane
1186 flew over at a great height. It was an old type of airplane
1187 with a propeller engine. That sound is easy to recognize.
1188 I could barely see the airplane, it was so high. But, when I
1189 noticed the sound, the airplane was almost directly overhead.
1190 The idea of the distance of the airplane is very clear.
1191 (The language for describing the dream is full of foreboding.)
1192 I'm sorry. I don't know any other way to tell the story
1193 of the dream, without telling you why the dream could
1194 surprise me so and still seem natural.
1195 (The image of the dream has about it the structure of foreboding.)
1196 I'm sorry. I'll go right to the thing
1197 that happened in the dream.
(Just a moment, please.)
1198 I'm sorry. Somebody called to me from the airplane. They called my
1199 name. I could hear it as clearly as if the caller were only a
1200 few feet away. But the sound of the call was at a great distance.
1201 The sound of the call came from the airplane.
(Just a moment, please.)
1202 I'm sorry. There was a great difference between the sound
1203 of the call and the sound that I could imagine coming from
1204 the airplane, especially because the sound of the airplane
1205 engine was so natural.
1206 (A woman is distressed by a dream, because the image of the
1207 dream differs from any image in her experience.)
1208 I'm sorry. The dream made me very happy, and it was memorable,
1209 because it was so surprising and so natural at the same time.
(Just a moment, please.)
1210 I'm sorry. I'm finished telling about the dream. That's all there was to it.
1211 I was standing in a meadow that had some kind of meaning that I could feel.
1212 An airplane flew over at a great height. A voice called to me,
1213 called my name, from the airplane. It was all very clear.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1214 The Offering of Images, as a spiritual activity,
1215 Replaces the impulse to find a personal vision, an icon.
1216 As a spiritual activity it distracts the individual from
1217 The task of finding and recognizing a singular, true path.
1218 The Offering of Images categorizes human activity and offers
1219 The sum of the categories as a sum of possibilities and
1220 Alternatives, each one of which must be equally good and
1221 Equally valid, else the system of categories breaks down.
1222 Like Modernism, Science and Theater as we know it, the
1223 Offering of Images and Protestantism, hand in hand,
1224 Are egalitarian, democratic and communistic.
1225 The Offering of Images is a secular spiritual activity.
1226 The Offering of Images has in our era attached itself
1227 As a spiritual activity to Judaism as a secular corrective
1228 To mysticism and individualism. The Offering of Images is a
1229 Secularization of Judaism, as Protestantism is a
1230 Secularization of Christianity, Modernism is the secularization
1231 Of taste, Science is the secularization of memory
1232 And Theater as we know it is a secularization of experience.
1233 There are other examples, but you get the idea.
1234 Remember that we have yet to find a language that is common to the Occident
1235 And Orient, except for the language of technology.
1236 Consider, then, the difficulties of speaking to the Fourth World, the world of
1237 Those who are "different" with a difference that is independent of geography;
1238 For instance, the mentally different. Secularization
1239 Must exclude the mentally different by definition.
1240 The mentally different share no images with us and they share no
1241 History with us. The mentally different cannot be Modern.
1242 The mentally different cannot be trusted in Science.
1243 The mentally different cannot appreciate Theater as we know it.
1244 One supposes that other differences than mental differences
1245 Separate the Fourth World from the three that communicate
1246 With such difficulty now. For instance, feeling.
1247 Suppose for a moment that beginning this instant, while
1248 Nothing in you changes mentally, you enter into a state of
1249 Permanent rapture, maybe not more intense than the pleasure
1250 You felt standing in the meadow of your imagination and being
1251 Addressed by name, without the ambiguity of distance, by
1252 Some animate being or knowing system in an elevated position
1253 -- to simplify the image a great deal without changing it
1254 Structurally -- but as intense

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1255 And without the encumbrance of the image.
1256 I think this is what is meant by pure bliss.
1257 The feeling without the image. You could not be Modern.
1258 You could not be trusted in Science. You could not appreciate
1259 Theater as we know it. You would be in the same relationship
1260 To the Real Worlds, One, Two and Three, as if you were
1261 Mentally different, and you would never be able to communicate to
1262 Those worlds that while intent upon a state of permanent rapture,
1263 You are mentally OK. You could do it by reference to the
1264 Dream, but remember you would not have had the dream --
1265 Might not know what dreams were -- and to try to communicate
1266 Through the image of the dream would reveal the passing nature of your
1267 Rapture. The Fourth World is different from the other Three,
1268 Otherwise we wouldn't need words at all, and it is different in the words.
1269 Now, the problem you will have in dealing with your dream as a
1270 Yardstick in your life is that it will fade. The greatest of the
1271 Prophets, Moses, the first Jew we can remember, was
1272 Very discouraging about the use of images. He thought that
1273 Any attempt to animate the world in one's imagination, to give it
1274 Any meaning at all, is a big mistake. If you, for instance, think of
1275 Dogs as "little" because they are smaller than you think
1276 You are, you have a long way to go before you rest.
1277 Traditionally, when imagination becomes too strong,
1278 Cultures resort to very strong chemical treatments,
1279 Usually from the vegetable world, to burn off the waste,
1280 Which is where the imagination arises. I think
1281 You must do some of that. Don't be frightened of the first stage,
1282 In which the imagination is purposely inflamed.
1283 Remember who you are. Stay near help. And don't give up.
1284 Eventually, you will come to pure bliss. The images will disappear.
1285 Dreams will stop. You won't need me.
1286 ---

1287 THANK YOU, DOCTOR.
1288 NOT TOO WELL SAID, BUT SOMETHING.
1289 GRANTED IT'S A HARD IDEA.
1290 HARD TO EXPRESS AND FAR FROM REASSURING.
1291 BUT WE'LL KEEP YOUR CARD ON FILE. JUST IN CASE.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Fifteen: "The Good Life"

(Linda and her Companion with Now Eleanor and Junior, Jr.)

1292 I can't imagine why I told that doctor my dream.
(She can't imagine why she told that doctor her dream.)

1293 We had just been introduced.
(They had just been introduced.)

1294 We might have made friends.
(They might have made friends.)

1295 It was like I was showing him pictures of my family from my wallet.
(It was like she was showing him pictures

1296 Fourteen dollars and twenty-eight cents for your thoughts, Linda.
of her family from her wallet.)

1297 I'm sorry. I was day-dreaming.
(She's sorry. She was day-dreaming.)

1298 You're not kidding. I've been sending you signals for the last five minutes.
(He's been sending her signals for the last five minutes.)

1299 I was thinking about that Doctor I met at the party last night.
(She was thinking about that Doctor she met at the

1300 And you know what he wanted!
party last night.) (Does she know what he wanted?)

1301 You're looking tired. You're not taking care of yourself.
(Do I look tired? I thought I looked good. He should have seen me a year ago.

1302 Now, what have you had to eat today? Don't leave anything out. Even a cup of
coffee counts.
(Does she look tired? She thought she looked good.

1303 There was my alarm radio. I left the music on for about twenty minutes,
(He should have seen her a year ago.)

1304 then I wanted to get the weather, I turned it off.
(She left the music on for about twenty minutes,

1305 Music has no calories.
then she wanted to get the weather, then she turned it off.)

1306 But you have to count the toothpaste.
(First the smell and then the toothpaste.)

1307 Toothpaste ...
(Toothpaste ...)

1308 I got some soap in my mouth, when I was washing my face.
(She got some soap in her mouth, when she was washing her face.)

1309 I'll bet I can list them for you.
(I don't know about that.)

1310 Coffee.
(First, tea.)

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

- 1311 First, tea.
(More caffeine.)
- 1312 Toast with butter.
(One hundred calories.)
- 1313 Orange juice.
(This is sixteen hours ago.)
- 1314 Your morning cigarette.
(My morning cigarette.)
- 1315 The newspaper.
(Headlines, pictures, astrology, recipes with guilt,
- 1316 You can only count what you put in your body.
pictures of world leaders, mainly men and women who look like men, pictures of
women (who look like women),
(I can only count what I put in my body.)
- 1317 What about the pictures?
letters to the editor saving the language, comic strips, mast heads, -- then, the
order gets blurry.)
- 1318 OK, you can count the pictures, but not the astrology.
(Saturn: A long day, with a lot of excitement. You tend to draw attention
- 1319 What about the flowers you gave me? What about the smells?
to yourself. Take chances, but be prepared for a hard knock or two.)
- 1320 If you count smells, you have to count the bad ones, too.
(If you count smells, you have to count the bad ones, too.)
- 1321 OK. No smells.
Do it as fast as you can. I'll bet you can't get
- 1322 half of them.
(Half of what?)
- 1323 The toothpaste.
- 1324 I got soap in my mouth.
- 1325 One prescription antihistamine.
- 1326 Half a valium.
- 1327 Two cups of tea with nothing.
- 1328 Glass of orange juice.
- 1329 Piece of toast with butter.
- 1330 Two cups of black coffee.
- 1331 Two nicotine cigarettes.
- 1332 Small amount of cocaine.
(By mouth, now. Wish I could go back to the real way,
- 1333 One nicotine cigarette.
but that's gone forever. Regret.)
- 1334 Toothpaste.
- 1335 Trace of mouthwash.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

- 1336 Four cigarettes.
1337 Black coffee
1338 Part of a sweet roll.
1339 Three nicotine cigarettes.
1340 Part of a marijuana cigarette.
1341 One nicotine cigarette.
1342 Glass of red wine.
1343 Two slices of French bread, with butter.
1344 Some eggs cooked in milk and flour with small pieces of vegetables almost too small to count.
(But then what about the flavors? Why are they there?)
1345 Some lettuce with some kind of oil, cheap olive oil and vinegar and garlic.
1346 Black coffee.
1347 One nicotine cigarette.
1348 Part of a marijuana cigarette.
1349 Some nicotine cigarettes.
1350 Black coffee.
1351 A piece of chocolate candy.
1352 Little bit of cocaine.
1353 Some nicotine cigarettes.
1354 Alcohol and fruit juice.
1355 Salty fried things.
(Who can tell anymore.)
1356 Glass of wine.
1357 One nicotine cigarette.
(She'll never finish.)
1358 A complicated dinner. I can't do it all.
(Meat and vegetables, all kinds of flavors, sugar.)
1359 Black coffee.
1360 Nicotine cigarettes.
1361 A small amount of cocaine.
(Small amount of cocaine.)
1362 This is all mixed up now.
(Sweet things. Cheese. Wine. Cigarettes. Part of a marijuana cigarette.)
1363 Smoke from some powder heated up that they say is a kind of opium.
(This is very special. Too expensive for her. And she doesn't know who sells it to whom or how it's done.)
1364 And here we are.
(And here she is and here he is.)
1365 More black coffee and more sweet things.
(Another cigarette.)
1366 When we get back to the car, I'll give you some more cocaine.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1367 I could give it to you now and you could do it in the bathroom.
1368 No thanks.
(Men give drugs to women.)
1369 What happens when you get home?
1370 Cigarettes. Cup of tea to make me sleep. Maybe some marijuana.
(The other half of the valium. Toothpaste.)
1371 Do you think that you could get through a whole day on your own?
(Does she think she could get through a whole day on her own?)
1372 Do you mean without prayer?
(Does he mean without prayer?)
1373 Very funny. Do you pray?
1374 Do moods count?
(Do moods count?)
1375 What do you mean?
(What does she mean?)
1376 Sometimes I get in a certain mood and I think it must be what prayer is like.
(Sometimes she gets in a certain mood, and she thinks that must be what prayer is like.)
1377 Maybe. I thought you had to actually do something.
(He thought you actually had to do something.)
1378 You mean like get down on your knees?
(Does he mean like get down on your knees?)
1379 Well, maybe. I thought that was the point.
(He thought that was the point.)
1380 What do you mean?
(She wants to know what he means.)
1381 I thought you had to humiliate yourself or something like that.
(He thought you had to humiliate yourself or something like that.)
1382 I guess I don't pray, then.
(She guesses she doesn't pray, then.)
1383 You do exercises.
(He says she does exercises.)
1384 Not any more.
(Not any more.)

(Scene Fifteen interrupted.)

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Sixteen: "Trouble"

(Now Eleanor and Chorus)

1385 During this conversation a man seated at another table
1386 with a party of other men has begun attracting
1387 her attention in the crudest kind of way.
1388 Where do they come from, these guys?
1389 What do they do when they're not acting like this?
1390 The men are laughing loudly. She and her companion
1391 are the subject of the jokes. That's obvious.
1392 She is afraid of what is happening.

(Scene Sixteen interrupted.)

Scene Fifteen: "The Good Life" (continued)

1393 I think we ought to go now.
 (She thinks they ought to go now.)
1394 I do, too. Those drunks are making me mad.
1395 Don't do anything. Just ignore them.
 (She asks him not to do anything. She asks him to ignore them.)
1396 We can pay the waiter on the way out.
 (She wants to pay the waiter on the way out. She is nervous. Men acting this way
 confuse her.)

(Scene Fifteen interrupted.)

Scene Sixteen: "Trouble" (continued)

1397 They stand to go. To walk by the men
1398 laughing at them is the direct way.
1399 To take another path would invite comment.
1400 She walks past the table ahead of her companion.
1401 As he starts to walk past the same spot,
1402 the man at the table leans back suddenly,
1403 knocking him into a person at a third table. Much laughter.
1404 Her companion puts the coats he is carrying, his and hers,
1405 on the nearest chair, and hits the man who leaned into him
1406 more or less in the face. This is what it has been leading
1407 up to. Two other men from the table grab her companion
1408 clumsily. The fourth is laughing loudly. She
1409 notices how much the men are grunting.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1410 Other people in the restaurant are talking loudly.
1411 Two waiters are there almost immediately.
1412 Their authority prevails. The man who was
1413 attracting her attention fakes some kind of
1414 emotion. He calls her ugly names.
1415 There is still pushing and shoving. A woman from
1416 another table is talking loudly to the drunken man who
1417 started the trouble. He answers her in
1418 vile language. Her companion, then,
1419 strikes the drunk very hard and quickly.
1420 The drunk is obviously hurt. His face is bleeding.
1421 The other three men from the party
1422 talk loudly, but they are afraid.
1423 Suddenly, there are two policemen in the room.
1424 Everybody is surprised. Why are they
1425 here? With so much authority.
1426 The drunken men pretend that they are sober.
1427 But they respond too quickly to the policemen
1428 and to the commands. They argue.
1429 The younger waiter explains quickly to
1430 the policemen. He called them earlier. He saw
1431 the trouble coming. There is very little discussion.
1432 This is the source of the police authority.
1433 They have learned not to listen unless they have asked to be told.
1434 They are not interested in blame. Before anyone is
1435 aware that it has been done they have the names of everyone in the restaurant.
1436 They have moved the four drunken men to the sidewalk.
1437 Another police car arrives, lights flashing, but the policemen do not come
1438 into the restaurant. The four drunken men are gone. One of the policemen
1439 speaks briefly to the man who struck the drunk and hurt him. The man looks very
1440 sad. His wife is trying to console him. The waiter explains that the
1441 restaurant does not expect to be paid. The man and woman leave quickly,
without
1442 speaking. The waiter apologizes for what happened. He saw
1443 the trouble coming, but he didn't know how to stop it.
1444 He called the police. They didn't get here in time.

End of Scene Sixteen.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Fifteen: "The Good Life" (continued)

1445 Four nicotine cigarettes.
(One left for tomorrow morning.)
1446 A little bit of brandy.
(It's always too strong. Why do people drink it?)
1447 Marijuana.
1448 End of the cocaine.
1449 Five grain valium.
(Use the broken tab tomorrow.)
1450 Toothpaste.
(A fake mint flavor.)

1451 AND THE TROUBLES ARE PUT ASIDE.
1452 WELL NOT QUITE. LET'S SAY PUT
1453 INSIDE. BEST NOT THOUGHT OF.
1454 BUT THE CITY HAS LOST ITS CHARM.
1455 AND WHAT FOLLOWS IS A RECORD OF REWARDS
1456 WITHOUT SWEETNESS. WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO SAY?

Scene Seventeen: "A Place In the Country"

(Now Eleanor, The Doctor, Mr. Payne's Mother, with Linda and Junior, Jr.)

1457 She makes a name for herself at work
1458 She speaks sharply if she disagrees
1459 Attracting respect for her opinions
1460 This is as high as I can go
1461 How do you know that you know it?

1462 She wins a large cash prize in the lottery
1463 She allows her picture in all of the papers
1464 Showing a permanent disbelief
1465 This is as high as I can go
1466 How do you know that you know it?

1467 She is trapped with a man in an elevator
1468 She imagines he looks like her father
1469 Television is there when they get out
1470 This is as high as I can go
1471 How do you know that you know it?

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1472 "Approaching the present, time is compressed
1473 Toward an infinite Now, infinitely fast,"
1474 She tells them (What an Idea, Linda!)
1475 This is as high as I can go
1476 How do you know that you know it?

1477 She finally buys an apartment in town
1478 Through a cousin who works in the government
1479 -- and does real estate on the side
1480 This is as high as I can go
1481 How do you know that you know it?

1482 The picture window reminds her of Don
1483 It looks west toward what could be water
1484 (The best views are all bought by the Army)
1485 This is as high as I can go
1486 How do you know that you know it?

1487 She inherits a place in the country
1488 She visits once and then puts it in trust
1489 "For cousins, of cousins, from cousins, forever."
1490 This is as high as I can go
1491 How do you know that you know it?

1492 She visits Europe (partially business)
1493 She sees too much that reminds her of home
1494 But a sense of the past is still there
1495 This is as high as I can go
1496 How do you know that you know it?

1497 Back home she encounters the man from the restaurant
1498 She feels sympathy and he doesn't know her
1499 He wears the same brown shirt and tie
1500 This is as high as I can go
1501 How do you know that you know it?

1502 She finally remembers her companion's name
1503 She lists everything she's done today
1504 All diet and exercise (thoughts for the future)
1505 This is as high as I can go
1506 How do you know that you know it?

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1507 WE'VE REACHED THE END, ALMOST. YOU CAN READ IT IN THE VOICE, NOT TO
MENTION WHAT SHE'S
1508 SAID. SO, IMAGINE, NOW, FOR THE NEXT FEW MINUTES, AN OLDER WOMAN,
1509 STILL BEAUTIFUL, SENSE OF WONDER INTACT, PLAYING BRIDGE WITH FRIENDS,
1510 THE DAY-DREAMING INSEPARABLE FROM THE NARRATIVE, SUCH AS IT IS.
1511 NOTICE THAT SHE TRIES TO TELL US ABOUT SOMETHING UNUSUAL. AN
EXPERIENCE.
1512 SHE DOESN'T TELL IT VERY WELL. THEN A LETTER FROM HER SON. THEN WHAT'S
IN THE CARDS.

Scene Eighteen: "Happiness, Prosperity and Forgetfulness" (The Chorus with Now Eleanor and Linda)

1513 Places better
1514 On the horizon
1515 The Wanderer (copyright)
1516 Pretends she doesn't
1517 The way she thinks
1518 Now the idea of
1519 Refuge, the idea of
1520 Looking ahead to
1521 The sun and a pool
1522 "Wherever she goes
1523 she learns the dances
1524 she learns the language
1525 faster than anyone"
1526 Miami (Cuba)
1527 Chicago (Germany)
1528 Hollywood (Aztlán)
1529 Then gone
1530 Oh, well, forget it

1531 Scrapbooks from home
1532 Old occupations
1533 A craze for religion
1534 Changes her name
1535 Jesus Brings Happiness
1536 Changes it back
1537 Thinks she sees --
1538 I'm almost positive
1539 Tanned (with a mustache!)

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1540 More heavy and serious
1541 Careless with urgency
1542 Troubled (she watches)
1543 She follows (unthinking)
1544 He disappears
1545 She follows, approaches
1546 He disappears
1547 He's gone
1548 Oh, well, forget it

1549 For a few days she thinks she should consult with someone
1550 but these are the kinds of things that when you tell people
1551 that's what you've experienced and that's what concerns you
1552 they misunderstand and take your concern (for your sanity)
1553 more seriously than they take the experience -- what it
1554 might mean if it were simply factual and un-interpreted.

1555 Those men go out to space in those little capsules with their
1556 brains and their imaginations tested for any possible thing
1557 going wrong but they come back "changed" by something and
1558 then we stop believing them and believing in them when just
1559 recently their experiences were an ultimate authority for us
1560 and their reports of their experiences are all we have.

1561 In other words, at the moment when you most need help
1562 in the form of belief in the authority of your experience --
1563 the extent of the experience (how it compares to others, its
1564 power) is the very way we measure whether the experience is
1565 something you might have had or whether it is just something
1566 you dreamed up and you really need a different kind of help.

1567 I'm almost positive
1568 But then
1569 Does it change anything
1570 Whoever it was
1571 Did it the same
1572 What I said, though,
1573 He seemed to know
1574 No sign of --
1575 "recognition" -- and
1576 He seemed to know
1577 He was closer than you are

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1578 Three steps away
1579 I saw the sign
1580 not "recognition"
1581 Acknowledgement
1582 ("Which card is the red one?")
1583 Then gone
1584 Oh, well, forget it.

1585 It occurs to her finally that unless there are to be
1586 many of these things in her life and the whole life
1587 changes in tune with them then she is allowing the
1588 experience to cast a shadow over other kinds of things
1589 that are more important to her and that before the experience
1590 had gone unnoticed, unattended and unexplored.
1591 She says to herself whenever she gets trapped now in
1592 the "How many of us are there" kind of questions
1593 you have to learn to keep your mouth shut about
1594 something that is only a part of you even if it is
1595 unusual or that part of you will get in the way of
1596 having the "pleasure" of the other parts.

1597 That's harder than you think because as we all know
1598 the palaces of the imagination are full of
1599 people who have no imagination to speak of.
1600 Something happened to them that no one believes.
1601 They have become untrustworthy in our eyes.
1602 We must convince them that they are wrong.

1603 Years pass
1604 It's forgotten
1605 Just forgotten
1606 Proving that one
1607 Experience
1608 Among many is
1609 One among many.
1610 Learn to play bridge
1611 The pleasure of company
1612 Systems of memory
1613 (Cards out of focus!)
1614 "How to Remember"
1615 Memories shared
1616 I used to smoke cigarettes

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1617 I used to love dancing
1618 I used to stay up late
1619 Then gone
1620 (TACIT)

1621 Nearest of all in memory is Mr. Payne: "it can end
1622 so suddenly, so completely, and who remembers what
1623 the reason was?" I heard, much after it had happened,
1624 that he had been seriously hurt. It seemed almost
1625 unimaginable to me. It was clear when I was with him
1626 that he had to suffer. That was written all over him.
1627 The suffering was there, had probably always been there
1628 in him. It must have come to him and been accepted
1629 by him when he was very young. But hurt is different
1630 from suffering. It's a kind of insult. And so it was
1631 unimaginable that both could be together in one person,
1632 and that that person could endure.
1633 Next nearest in memory is the guy -- what is his name?
1634 This moment! Now! this moment! No, now it's
1635 too late. If it's not there, it's never been
1636 a part of you. The Doctor told a funny story about
1637 a man who lost his fiancée's name when he was
1638 introducing her to someone at the announcement party.
1639 She walked out and refused to go through with
1640 the marriage. The Doctor was sure that she had
1641 done the right thing, and I asked if he meant
1642 that from a defensive point of view or whether
1643 you could take it from the point of view of jousting,
1644 or whatever. He didn't understand my question.
1645 The guy I wanted to put nearest to Mr. Payne,
1646 the guy next in my life -- the nameless one --
1647 could never understand what I was telling him
1648 about myself. We always stayed up too late,
1649 and -- he could never understand. Everything
1650 a girl could want, except -- I had to leave.
1651 Who is next in memory? Oh, yes, my days with
1652 the founder of The Paris Salon of Beauty, Inc.
1653 ("I Am A Reductionist:" By Appointment.)
1654 A charming view with modernistic furniture and
1655 a closet full of French clothing in America.
1656 Imagine those characters in the closet plotting.
1657 The angry exiles. Their revolution. That was

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1658 the most fun about him and I couldn't tell him.
1659 He was a charmer with certainty like sunshine.
1660 Nothing without a reason. Daylight. No whispers.
1661 I heard a constant whirring motion. High pitched.
1662 The idea of the perfect machine. Admired.
1663 What does it take to make one stop looking?
1664 First, midnight dancing in the arcade cathedral.
1665 Pure happiness, if that word means anything.
1666 Then -- this is funnier than I thought -- Prosperity:
1667 "Gourmet Foods from Around the World (24 hours)."
1668 Finally, the idea of the perfect body. Forgetfulness.
1669 You'd think I'd look a little better than I do.

Scene Nineteen: "The Bridge Game"

(Linda, Junior, Jr. and Chorus)

1670 I'd like to read you this letter from my son.
1671 My pride is boundless. It seems so perfect.
1672 The way he has found a life that pleases him.
1673 His mind is so clear about what he calls
1674 "reality." No grudge against his father.
1675 No grudge against his mother, I hope. No
1676 trace of something hanging in the air about him.
1677 Where did he learn to dress so well? How did he
1678 come by such confidence and poise -- after
1679 what he went through? It makes him very happy.
1680 Dear Mom, everything is going well.
1681 I love the summer in the winter here.
1682 I hope to get a new assignment.
1683 The Office has a new, large project.
1684 They call it by a famous painter's name.
1685 You'll read about it in the papers.
1686 When you do, you'll know where I am.
1687 That's as much as I can say.
1688 I meet the most interesting people.
1689 Yesterday it was a man who sells --
1690 I have to think about the way to say this --
1691 A very common object that we never see.
1692 Couldn't get anywhere without it.
1693 Old as the wheel. And that's a hint.
1694 Some Italians thought about it differently.
1695 That's as much as I can say.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1696 Anyway, we bought thousands of them.
1697 Does that give you an idea?
1698 He's the strangest man I've ever seen.
1699 Didn't care about the Office Project.
1700 Didn't know the painter's name.
1701 Took the Executive Washroom for two hours!
1702 Can you imagine? Two hours!
1703 I asked a person (whose name you know)
1704 Why do we do business with him?
1705 You'll never guess the answer.
1706 "HE MAKES THE BEST ONES IN THE WORLD."
1707 The common object that we never see.
1708 Two hours in the Executive Washroom.
1709 So what? Disturbs the Office staff.
1710 So what? The best ones in the world.
1711 He calls his employees, "My subjects."
1712 And there's funnier stuff than that.
1713 Incredible pictures of his family.
1714 We're in stitches. He's around
1715 A few more days. Then he goes
1716 Off on contract for the Office.
1717 A consultation. GOD KNOWS WHAT THEY'LL SEE.
1718 The Office has a large-scale project.
1719 I said that already, didn't I?
1720 The Project's in my specialty.
1721 Maybe the reason I was hired.
1722 I want to measure the unmeasurable.
1723 Reconcile the incommensurable.
1724 The world could use this.
1725 And I like the painter's name.
1726 It even sounds like success,
1727 if you begin with what is --
1728 "silent, as in swimming."
1729 Remember that old joke?
1730 Then make the second sound
1731 (FIRST, DROP THE ESS)
1732 broader, as in father.
1733 Then, add an oh, as in, say --
1734 Regret for a father lost.
1735 That's as much as I should say.
1736 I'll write to you again, soon.
1737 Maybe I'll have a permanent address.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1738 Meantime, use the Office one.
1739 Letters get to me eventually.
1740 Hope your bridge is getting better.
1741 Love, your hardworking Son.
1742 His specialty is measuring the use of
1743 energy in what he calls "Unknown Systems."
1744 As far as I can understand it,
1745 he thinks about whether humans
1746 could exist on other food than --
1747 what we call food. Imagine.
1748 He thinks vitamins are old-fashioned,
1749 but a good idea. I take them.
1750 God only knows what he takes.
1751 I love his letters, but I can't
1752 understand them. He's so secretive.
1753 But what he can't tell me in this one
1754 will be in the papers and on TV
1755 tomorrow. Just wait and see.

1756 And that's the end of Linda's story.
1757 Playing bridge with friends.
1758 Sharing pictures from the past --
1759 too complicated for photography.
1760 ---

1761 THIS IS THE LAST HAND. IT'S GETTING LATE.
1762 NORTH: BERLIN, A TANGO. MIXED EMOTIONS.
1763 EAST: RIVER ROUGE. THE RED RIVER. THE MOVEMENT.
1764 SOUTH: CAMPO DEI FIORI (ROME). EARLY WARNING.
1765 WEST: ATLANTIS, WHERE WHAT CAME BEFORE AND NOW ARE JOINED.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Twenty: "North (Berlin / A Tango)" (Chorus and Linda)

1766 tentative and of two minds she
1767 about the tango records is
1768 and about nostalgia here
1769 and in the pauses questions of
1770 respectability about
1771 nostalgia great distances
1772 longings fear and bravery mixed
1773 argentina (etcetera)
1774 look the boy has wild, yellow hair,
1775 a cafe ("everyone's a spy")
1776 green hair, dark hair, layered bands of
1777 meeting places in the open
1778 graffiti "a" advertisements
1779 "for music, sir" (not anarchy)
1780 corrects her english is happy
1781 proud and fearful *das gewissen*
1782 suddenly the music is back
1783 listen for words now the answer
1784 the high drums again (... proportions)
1785 evening the idea of a place
1786 beyond, where the western ocean
1787 is not far the usefulness of
1788 water on the hair the beauty
1789 ... glistens something interrupted
1790 the idea (a little worn, now)
1791 the divided city penance
1792 as if, apart from the idea...
1793 and watching a tango berlin
1794 *einer berliner* remembered
1795 i am a half dollar *ich bin*
1796 dallas (argentina) fear with
1797 bravery mixed nostalgia

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

Scene Twenty-one: "East (River Rouge)"

(Linda and Chorus)

1798 THE BIGGEST BUILDING
1799 IN THE WORLD
1800 PAYS ME FIVE A DAY.
1801 BRAND NEW SUIT,
1802 CIGARETTES,
1803 I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY.
1804 WORDS CAN NEVER CHANGE IT.
1805 MONEY TALKS.
1806 WORK IS HERE TO STAY.

Scene Twenty-two: "South (Campo dei Fiori, Rome)"

(Linda and Chorus)

1807 I say to them, look, twenty-eight
1808 million, two hundred seventy-eight thousand,
1809 four hundred sixty-six (the figure
1810 makes it real!), all facing the same way,
1811 arms raised, allow their image to be snapped?
1812 We're supposed to take that idea
1813 seriously? You must be kidding.
1814 BUT THEY DO.

1815 Almost unimaginable. Twenty-eight
1816 million, two hundred seventy-eight thousand,
1817 four hundred sixty-six (calculated
1818 simply!), all facing the same way,
1819 arms raised, allow their image to be snapped.
1820 To represent an idea? You can't
1821 believe they could hold still.
1822 BUT THEY DO.

1823 I try to tell them. I hear others
1824 try to tell them that it's a big mistake.
1825 It's unspeakable. A flash of light. Twenty-eight
1826 million, two hundred seventy-eight thousand,
1827 four hundred sixty-six (because it
1828 happened once!) could perish in a flash of light.
1829 They deny that they admit the possibility.

Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)

1830 BUT THEY DO.

1831 WHAT COMES NEXT IS WHAT WAS FIRST, OR SO THEY SAY.
1832 AS FAR BACK AS WE CAN GO
1833 (AT LEAST ON THIS SYSTEM.)
1834 NOTICE THAT WE SPEAK OF IT WITH AWE.
1835 AS IF THERE WERE PERFECTION ONCE. THAT'S NICE.
1836 AND AS IF THERE IS RENEWAL. THAT'S NICE, TOO.

Scene Twenty-three: "West (Atlantis)" (Linda and Chorus)

1837 Some islands
1838 GONE NOW
1839 The first among us
1840 TALKED ABOUT

1841 Some islands
1842 GONE NOW
1843 Safe place for sailors
1844 TALKED ABOUT

1845 Some islands
1846 GONE NOW
1847 Lost in an instant
1848 TALKED ABOUT

1849 Some islands
1850 GONE NOW
1851 Still in the papers
1852 TALKED ABOUT

1853 ---
1854 ---
1855 ---
1856 ---
1857 ---

End of the Opera.