

## **“You May Encounter Some Strangeness on Your Quest for Purpose”**

There's a nameless woman that you may meet  
when the desert sands have scorched your feet,  
when you've traveled directionless-miles from home  
and you carry your weight like a spiritual tome.  
Then she'll be there - vibrant in shade  
with her hand wrapped around an antique spade.  
She'll lean on it, heavy, like a tired machine  
'till you offer her a sip from your dusty canteen  
Then she'll perk, she'll titter, and slurp it down  
and promptly start digging right into the ground  
She'll churn up the dirt like a divine human drill  
and you'll jump down beside her, surely you will  
and the hole will open to an oddly-lit place  
Maybe a cavern? a bunker? a base?

And this is the moment (if not before)  
where you'll wonder “is this what I wandered here for?”  
Because this place now before you is truly bizarre  
with walls of balloons made of shiny mylar -  
“I pick up the flimsies when they fall from the sky,”  
the woman will say with a glint in her eye.  
You'll see, in the light, coming from who-knows-where  
Shapes that are snail-like, or tail-like, or covered in hair.  
They'll wriggle like jellies and writhe about  
some slender, some massive, some squishy, some stout  
and these creatures, these things, will suddenly swoon  
As the woman starts chanting a dissonant tune:

“Oh dilly, oh dilly barunga baroo  
sometimes your shadow is laughing at you!  
Ah dally, Ah dally barooga barung  
Wiggle your fingers and stick out your tongue!”

And with that, the woman will freeze in place  
looking expectantly, straight at your face  
and you'll do it, I know it, surely you will  
you'll get caught up in the strangeness, the thrill  
so you'll wiggle your fingers and stick out your tongue  
and feel some strange joy that had since been unsprung.  
Then you will linger for hours or minutes or days  
'till you finally feel that you've master their ways  
then you'll climb up the tunnel and into the glare  
of a sunlit-desert and dust-ridden air

And you'll gather your pack and the old woman's spade  
heading off to the east towards the chrome and the shade

and you'll walk down the pavement like a carpet unfurled  
walking like someone who's been pleasantly twirled.  
You'll find yourself faced with a dull-people-horde  
as you carry that spade like a jester's foam sword  
when you find that someone who's lingering, lost  
with a face full of sorrow clearly embossed  
you'll bend, eye-to-eye with them, surely you will  
'till they look at you questioning, still.  
Then you'll twirl that old spade like a showman's cane  
and belt out, with glory, that peculiar refrain:  
"Oh dilly, oh dilly, barunga baroo  
Sometimes your shadow is laughing at you  
Ah dally, ah dally barooga barung  
Wiggle your fingers and stick out your tongue"

And maybe they'll do it! Or maybe they'll go –  
Not knowing the knowledge you surely now know:  
If you appreciate the absurdity, relish the weird  
Some of those worries, those things that you've feared  
Transform into oddities with fur and with tails.  
Strangeness emboldens, empowers, unveils.

## **The Chairlift to The Edge of the World**

There's a chairlift to the edge of the world.  
Everyone rides it at the age of thirteen.  
I had quite a ride - solemn winds swirled -  
and I sat beside infamous Elmer Eugene  
(who's shifty smile was considered obscene).  
He twitched as we passed over cities of rust  
'till his eyes seemed to focus on something unseen  
And he spoke with a voice like billowing dust:

“Here, kid, is the edge of everything,  
or so they'll tell you, back over in town.  
But I think their certainty's all whittled-down.  
The truth is: edges ain't worth a damn thing.”  
With that, Elmer Eugene, grinned, winked  
and leapt off the lift into the indistinct.

## **Ballad for a Modern Wanderer**

As you walked out one morning  
along cement sprinkled with dew  
All the graffiti-covered walls,  
were seas parted specially for you

you ventured round the corner  
past the rust-encrusted van  
hearing the hum-drum of the masses  
watching the star-spangled man

“For a limited time only”  
He said through a porcelain grin  
“In a dozen different colors  
our deals will make you great again!”

“We've got everything-free food  
sex-things without the sin  
We've got techs and trends and trinketry  
all made right here, so come on in!”

As you began to pass him by  
at your best processional gait  
your squinting, jaded gaze  
seemed to initiate debate:

“Alright, alright I see this catch  
won't be simply by the book  
but take a look around you  
every fish is bound to bite the hook.

“Minimalists have got their gadgets  
Aesthetics dream of packaged meals  
and Marxists stomp their revolution  
with leather boots and rubber heels.

“So bend a knee towards the future!  
bend a knee while supplies last!  
we're moving on with or without you  
don't be a relic of the past!”

You strode on past with purpose  
like a spear thrown in defense  
but your shadow stretched and lingered  
as you reached the city fence.

It swelled with exclamation  
under the hunching of the sun,  
“You cast aside the wise meanders

when you insist upon a run”

“look back, look back” it panted  
“don't you wonder what you've missed?  
There's countless truths you've stumbled over  
valid opinions you've dismissed!

I've seen the shade you've cast on others  
I've held them in their dismay.  
Can you not rectify the wrongness  
of those you've treated in this way?”

But your shadow, you decided  
was just self-serving and afraid -  
that it might disappear entire  
as you vaulted-over toward the shade.

And in the dense green thickets  
you stopped to recline at last,  
untroubled by the future  
unbothered by the past.