

Quel beau Dimanche;

the hot summer air and the brightly shining sun; green grass, pretty flowers. Sleeping under the shade of a tree, next to her, warmth surrounds them. Her bright yellow dress just as bright as his smile, as bright as his eyes when he looks at her, his beautiful wife, the mother of his children and his life partner, a perfect giver and provider of love and tenderness. Quel beau Dimanche! She takes him in her arms, embracing him like he's the most precious of creatures. She's perfect. He's perfect. And their children are naturally perfect, too. On this perfect Sunday, they sit somewhere amidst the perfect French countryside. Breathing in the pure and uncorrupted air; smiling, laughing, and giggling. Pure, undeniable, and joyful bliss. Oh, to love and to be loved this way! Perhaps, says a man on TV, happiness is nothing but the submission to the natural order.



Their home, much like the French countryside, is brightly colored and florally decorated. They put their children to bed; goodnight, my love; goodnight, Maman; goodnight, Papa. Husband takes Wife into his arms. Quel beau Dimanche, what a peaceful ending to a most happy day. Perfectly blissful days go by until one day, the man meets another pretty blond and just like that, they fall in love. He does not lie to her when he tells her he loves her and he does not lie about his family; I love my wife very much, he says. What about me, she asks quietly; I love you; he assures her. Unlike his family home, this new woman's home has bare white walls, she lives out of a suitcase; an unmarried woman's life, her apartment is a space that has not been filled yet, that has not been domesticized. Her happiness lies in her freedom, her lack of history and the endless possibilities that can fill up the walls of her life. With his love he fills her space, and she lets him. The love for his wife does not waver. He's never been happier. His actions seem to have no consequences; adultery and fidelity are suddenly allowed; they are a part of the natural order of things. Did he



find true happiness? Maybe the lack of consequence to his greediness, to his selfishness is what's making him so happy? No colors are being taken away from his life, no flowers, no beautiful music, no refreshing Sunday trips to the countryside. Quel beau Dimanche! Perhaps this really is the natural order of things, perhaps, it is in accepting this



natural order without melodrama and without altercation that happiness lies. His life becomes a dance in a park on a summerly Sunday, devouring sweet things and breathing in the aromas of the perfect European summer air. All the freedom in the world! And oh, how delightful is the happiness that ensues. Skin touches skin, the heat of passion grows, time flies and the fairytale of exquisite

marital bliss and summertime romance goes on and on. Until one day on another beautiful Sunday in the French countryside, right next to their tree, the husband tells his wife of his month-long affair. Laying there, excited rather than nervous, he tells her with passionate eyes, that he has been involved with another woman. His wife does not start crying, she does not throw a fit, does not get up and slap him across the face. No, she stays, she listens to what he has to say. And he promises that he loves her still and tells her that if it upsets her, he will leave the other woman at once. *Quel beau Dimanche*; the couple does not quarrel; they do not scream and shout at each other. Their naked bodies lay in the grass of the gorgeous countryside, beneath a bright summer sun and a clear sky, each enraptured by the skin of the other and the ravishing beauty of the nature that encompasses their bodies oh so tenderly. How can one *not* lay back and relax when all one's seemingly selfish actions have no consequences, when one possesses the privilege of being without secrets, when nothing stands in the way of the fulfillment of one's desires? Isn't this what happiness is? To be free, to do what you want, to ignore the rules that are in the way of your true desires....*quel beau Dimanche*...when he wakes up from the moment, his wife, much to his surprise is no longer beside him. Where is Mama, he asks the children. *Thérèse!* He calls out. *Thérèse! Thérèse!?* His calls start becoming more and more frantic, as he walks around the woods and makes his way to a river. *Monsieur, have you seen a young blond woman, wearing a blue dress? A blond with a blue dress, Madame, have you seen her?*

Madame?

Monsieur?

Thérèse!?

On this beautiful Sunday, a frantic man is searching, asking everyone he sees if they have seen his wife. And the body of a lifeless woman, a young blond, wearing a blue dress, is being dragged out of the river. The man drops to the ground as his heart sinks. *Thérèse...my*



love...did you let yourself be taken by the water, or did you tumble into it without knowing? My love, my love, my love, why did you ever leave my side.

Even as tragedy ensues, the colors in his life, and the flowers in his apartment do not disappear.

The beautiful Sundays continue to come, and the river continues to flow; this is, after all, the natural order of things. I know it's terrible, says the other blond woman, when the man goes to see her.

Time flies and one last beautiful Sunday is at the door. A man and a woman take a walk in the French countryside, wearing matching colors; two blond children play with sticks and stones



they've found on the ground. All of them, carrying nothing but peace in their hearts and wide grins across their faces. Not long after, the perfect family, walks away, hand in hand and deeper into greenery.

The natural order of things has been accepted and with it, their happiness grows. No matter how selfish, inconsiderate, or impudent some actions may have been. No matter who has been wronged or how; one must succumb to the natural order of things. Maybe happy endings are only obtainable for those who are selfish enough to obtain them. It might just be pure chance, fate that had allowed happy endings for some, while it allowed others to drown, grasping for air. The natural order of things seems to be a wavering concept, one that can probably only exist in a black and white world; or in this case, a world full of saturated color... And yet, it might just be the fault of the storytellers; the ones who choose to only tell the stories of those who have been favored and blessed by "the natural order of things". Consumers of such stories then, become accustomed to such things and expect them not only from the stories they consume but also from their own lives. It is with a bitter taste, that the spectator watches the ideal family walking further away and deeper into the woods; quel beau Dimanche. It's as if the film looked its spectators in the eyes and said, isn't this exactly what you wanted? Isn't this the happiness you believe in? Isn't this the finality, the binarity that you came for? Well, there you have it, dear viewer, dear reader; believe in everything you see, believe in the magic of the French countryside and the beautiful Sundays; turn a blind eye on everything that does not fit your aesthetic.

Text by Miriam Ghobrial; Picture Credit: Varda, Agnès: *Le Bonheur* (1965)