



# Life A User's Manual (Verba Mundi Book 18)

*Georges Perec*

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Over twenty years ago, Godine published the first English translation of Georges Perec's masterpiece, *Life A User's Manual*, hailed by the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Boston Globe*, and others as "one of the great novels of the century." We are now proud to announce a newly revised twentieth anniversary edition of *Life*. Carefully prepared, with many corrections, this edition of *Life A User's Manual* will be the preferred reference edition for the future. *Life* is an unclassified masterpiece, a sprawling compendium as encyclopedic as Dante's *Commedia* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and, in its break with tradition, as inspiring as Joyce's *Ulysses*. Structured around a single moment in time — 8:00 p.m. on June 23, 1975 — Perec's spellbinding puzzle begins in an apartment block in the XVIIth arrondissement of Paris where, chapter by chapter, room by room, like an onion being peeled, an extraordinary rich cast of characters is revealed in a series of tales that are bizarre, unlikely, moving, funny, or (sometimes) quite ordinary. From the confessions of a racing cyclist to the plans of an avenging murderer, from a young ethnographer obsessed with a Sumatran tribe to the death of a trapeze artist, from the fears of an ex-croupier to the dreams of a sex-change pop star to an eccentric English millionaire who has devised the ultimate pastime, *Life* is a manual of human irony, portraying the mixed marriages of fortunes, passions and despairs, betrayals and bereavements, of hundreds of lives in Paris and around the world. But the novel is more than an extraordinary range of fictions; it is a closely observed account of life and experience. The apartment block's one hundred rooms are arranged in a magic square, and the book as a whole is peppered with a staggering range of literary puzzles and allusions, acrostics, problems of chess and logic, crosswords, and mathematical formula. All are there for the reader to solve in the best tradition of the detective novel.



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