

THE PAMPERERS

BY MINA LOY

Invisible Obvious
Picked People
Houseless Loony

Porcelain breath — Sèvres bow — Gilded crimson — Curved flutings — Brocade — Tailored muscles — Whipped cream — Blue spirals — Salved lips — Salon — Debussy — Azaleas — Ancestors — Armorial complacencies — Ooze

Picked people melted by a distinguished method among the upholstery.

TAG ENDS OF OVERHEARD CONVERSATION

The social fabric is a curtain . . . and that warm garnet fold-shadow there, for souls hide and seek. . . .

Decency shudders in the bare moment, taut between vestibule and auto. . . .

. . . . my crystalline lorgnette, . . . trees . . . at this season are all undressed.

The earth a poignant undertaker. . . .

I wish I had a wig darling.

. . . . Observe the legs, the agony of the crucified . . . the tendons . . . delicate as Dresden china 15th century

. . . ah yes! the troubles of the steam heating plant . . . man from Milan knows his business. . . .

Oh Prince how charming of you . . . and what is your opinion of the sex question?

How simple . . . still I can't quite agree with you . . . we shall never give up wearing silk stockings.

Somebody: Ossy you know has discovered a genius . . .
Ossy: . . . coming from the club . . . wonderful chap, see his predatory eye . . .

- picking up cigar ends . . . the grand passion . . . pockets full . . .
- Somebody:* Picasso uses all sorts of odds and ends.
- Ossy:* No critic dare anticipate the masterpiece this man may stack . . .
- Somebody:* Mud larks and geniuses!
- Ossy:* There's a revival in **THE THING** being a patron . . . I've got a Medici Villa somewhere . . . put the fellow in the stables here . . . heart's content . . . counting fags
Wait and see; fond of my dinner doesn't prevent me having an enormous respect for these creative sky-rocket-in-the-sewer chaps; *wait and see*
I've got flair . . . taken two of you to have got onto those cigar ends . . . *like that* . . . my God!
I'd forgotten Diana . . . Diana collects geniuses!
- Somebody:* She's got perfect toes . . . pedicured on a diamond footstool . . .
- Somebody Else:* Bach played for her bath . . .
- Somebody:* Isadora Allen to dance her awake
- S. E.:* Bought a museum to wear at a ball
- Somebody:* Has to have the Daily Mail transposed into the Arabic for the autumn, British Journalese has a bite in it . . . superfluously supplements the morning frost . . .
- S. E.:* Steam from hot cocoa is so suggestive of breathing in the open
- Somebody:* But she has so many butterflies in her night-cap . . .
- S. E.:* Avoiding the vulgarity of looking expensive she waters the aloe in sack-cloth. Does nothing to her complexion, but a penny worth of ice
Has her own bran-mash prepared for her at the Ritz . . . reads Mahabharata through cotillions . . .
- Somebody:* So bored . . . has the most perfect yawn in

Europe . . . , virgin eyelashes, and abortive
 morals . . . why Di dear, we were just talk-
 ing about you . . .

*(Diana turns off the light, sits on the pekinese
 which sinking still deeper into cushions notices
 nothing; and meditates in a fussy silence on the
 dial of a luminous watch.)*

*(Two intimate friends sidle into the conserva-
 tory)*

- 1st Friend:* Can I trust you?
2nd Friend: Did I trust you?
1st F.: Then I will tell you where I really was last week
 . . . at home with a black eye.
2nd F.: And where . . . ?
1st F.: Oh, he was at home with a black eye too.
2nd F.: How ripping!
1st F.: Delicious, we wore Longhi masks and had
 Watsiswinski play Handel on the spinet
2nd F.: Life can be very beautiful with a lover
1st F.: The Wedgewood and the Venetian lustres are in
 splinters and the ceiling had to be repainted
2nd F.: It is your passion for danger, serves you your
 incontestable hold on our social circle, whose
 criterion the intactness of porcelain, the watch-
 word . . . 'No china is ever broken here;
 here where the virginity of white carpets, sancti-
 fies the passage of the correct'
1st F.: Profundity of superficialities
2nd F.: While to Stavinski's meteors the animal whines
 a million moons behind evening dress
1st F.: Split passion to the forty gold pieces of a mani-
 cure set . . . and there it still is
2nd F.: Strew souls in fractions on dressing tables
1st F.: Oh keep it up . . . disintegratedly above
those others . . . what do you suppose they
 do . . . with insufficient money to do it
 with?

- 2nd F.: Nature looks after them
 1st F.: When you consider what *our régime* has done to Nature
 2nd F.: Diversion for our old age, in patching them up
 1st F.: Well, I suppose we're rotten thank God, we're rotting soft
 2nd F.: Double pile or an intellect walking about on it
 1st F.: Don't make me think might drive me to anything
 2nd F.: Come Di's lit up again Ossy's cocktails
Remember no china broken here

Somebody: Diana dear, you might tell us where you *were* while we were so patiently watching you?

(*Diana's chameleon rattles her emeralds.*)

Diana: Systematizing Futurist plastic velocity by the displacement of the minute-hand *Ho capito.*

Somebody Else: Isn't she wonderful?

A man (whose monocle has been hypnotized to idea associations by the luminous dial): I don't know anything about Marinetti; I don't want to know anything about Marinetti but I respect him he has a clean collar I am willing to accept the creed of any man who wears a clean collar

Somebody: Why the devil shouldn't Marinetti wear a clean collar?

I don't know why Marinetti shouldn't wear a clean collar, all I say is Marinetti wears a clean collar!

Ossy: Di if you half guessed what I've

caught in the stables, you'd throw futurism
to . . .

Diana: Don't mean . . . that I'm out of fashion
again

Ossy: Since 1 P.M. . . . dispensing entirely with
the middleman, we now have the genius served
directly to the consumer

Diana: Let us consume . . .

Ossy (to the footman): James! just fetch the whatsisname out of
the whatyoumecallems and don't let its feet
touch the floor.

*(The footmen carry in the Houseless Loony in
his natural condition . . . on a throne chair
with a step to it.*

*The Lady Diana has stood herself in front of
a large light that hazes her yellow hair.)*

Somebody: Di will be able to put him at his ease!

*(The importation fixes on her his fanatical eyes,
set in the lewdest eyelids, the rest is stubbly.)*

Diana: There are only two kinds of people in society
. . . geniuses and women.

Loony: I hang out with God and the Devil

Diana (continuing impressively): I am Woman.

Loony: May be . . . *(sniffing her approach)* . . .
but you smell like nothing-at-all; and all that
truck on you, makes me eye sneeze

*(Diana throws the emeralds, the chameleon and
divers odds and ends vaguely in the direction of
a Benozzo Gozzoli, and tries to imagine what
a smell is like . . .)*

Diana: I know . . . I knew . . . I have always
known . . . you alone can see beneath the
. . . beneath the . . . beneath the truck!

THE PAMPERERS

I am the elusion that cooed to your adolescent isolation, crystallized in the experience of your manhood . . . (Oh do stop blinking at me, or I can't go on) . . . I am that reciprocal quality you searched for among the moonlit mysteries of Battersea Bridge.

I come to you with gifts those other women had not to give

I am measured by the silence of inspiration, tuned to a laudatory discrimination . . . made of the instigatory caress . . . I know the moment to press the grape to thy lip . . . put ice on your head; for I am the woman who understands . . . so *do* tell me what you are going to make with those cigar-ends?

Loony:

I am going to make *Life* out of cigar-ends
Life

I must have *Life* . . . more life . . .
I am *Life* . . . my hair is full of life
. . . my clothes are alive; but I am not satisfied.

I will have more life . . . I will *make* more life . . . *Life* out of cigar ends

When God made *Life* . . . he rested and saw that it was . . . good . . . the devil interfered, making it dangerous. But *Life* is more than this or that. *Life* is *amusing!* And you (*to Diana*)—you make me laugh!

Diana:

I am the merriment to float your leisure . . .
And what do you do when you are not picking them up?

Loony:

Sit in the pub arguing with my companion

Diana:

You mentioned two . . .

Loony:

One and the same . . . 'God gives' and 'the Devil to pay!'

(*The room fills rapidly with the Loony's curiosity, the 'taken for granted' advances to audience gravely noticeable.*)

Such are the secret dens of the terrorized. Look here, you woman-as-you-may-say, strikes me I've wasted a lot of theoretic sympathy on the submerged . . . you don't look half sorry for yourselves. Why I've knocked a fellow down, out there in the Grand 'cause' he says 'they don't feel' says he . . . 'they can't have the same feelings as we have.' And yet, and yet . . . what would happen if one scraped some of the nap off you?

Somebody Else: So you're stopping at the Grand?

Loony: There is no stopping at the Grand . . . the Grand is all of 'Out There' . . . I am the grand man let loose in it. Out there where no knick knacks nudge you into minding your p's and q's . . . 'my miraculous ambulance in spatial mystery'; out there where there is everything to find . . . the grand man is able to pick up anything he is able to see.

Diana: (Sighs) Oh! . . . take me with you, I am the woman who can see.

Loony: You know not what you ask

Your aspirations are herculean

No human beings can be so polished, so sequestered, so hermetically sealed . . . but that they may still be able to aspire. I am the apostle of Fraternity. I find my brother in the most secluded coward . . . But out there . . . they are not all as I am . . . their sympathies have narrowed to their code. Were I to take you among them . . . you would suffer . . . even my protection would not suffice you.

You would be slighted . . . you would be criticised . . . considered soft.

You with your different way of sitting down, an unfamiliar manner of gulping food. Your most fervid conversation would lose itself as an impertinent silence among the debonaire rumble of

THE PAMPERERS

our caste. You would be witless and a bore; koh-i-noors for the cultured ear . . . the crude realism of our Imagists would call up none of the emotions of the initiated in you . . .

Somebody:

I say Ossy . . . we might be able to keep peace with 'em there.

Loony:

Not at all, with you the art of ribaldry relies entirely on technique . . . dilettante . . . again the cowardice of the submerged . . . Ours has the healthy spring of creative expression rooted in action . . . we coin nothing but the image and superscription of personal experience . . .

My poor child (*catching Diana's wrist as he descends from his throne . . . shuffling the velvet*). Dare you look . . . look . . . (*he looks for something he is surprised not to be able to find*) I was going to try to make you see the 'Grand.'

Ossy:

Oh Di, he wants a widow . . . James! draw the curtains.

(The curtains are drawn

The gilded shutters thrown back)—

Loony (to the grand outdoors): What an idea to muffle It up like that

Oh thou from whom all colds are caught . . . they're afraid of you catching cold!

(to Diana): Now my pretty house fly! Think of that mud . . . that bloody awful mud . . . in all the beauty of its bloody awfulness!

A quality that escapes you?

You have never felt it plasterly squelching between your toes, salving their parchment creak . . . cake coveringly for warm footed nights, or sensuous slop cheek-splattering as a wench's spittle . . . from about the Rolls-Royce passing of the pitiably immune.

*Somebody:**Loony:*

He can talk about something!
 Under the lemon-peel sunslip
 Human brachalian stretches
 Cautiously draw near to the feverish attainable,
 The blood-shot calculations of an eye
 Approximate spent ends
 There are many on 'em
 And there may
 Be always more
 Than man yet dares to wish for
 I maintain
 Though in those rare full hours of r-r-round
 numbers
 Perfection looms proportionate
 The ever-widening cycles of our Future
 Shall shed such transcendental showers of ideo-
 fags
 Shall muster the rear-forces of mentality
 To sublimate
 To boons that are
 For man to pounce upon.
 So in the low-g geared meanwhile
 The humble fanatic
 Collects from where he can
 Those battered finger-posts
 To his ideal
 Ashy iotas in the Balance of
 The easier equilibrium of Life,
 With patient love
 To raise them where they lay
 A tear of absolution
 For the weak
 Sucked to impersonality
 By
 The Zoroastrian mud.
 While every here and there
 The glowing ones . . .
 Flare to the common call
 Till numerously Enough

THE PAMPERERS

For Life
 Fourpence for dinner, sixpence for love
 My life!

Among the geometric static of your bric-à-brac
 Your idle wills
 Exile the unforeseen
 The nice initiative of 'nosing about'
 Wilts to the barren orderly
 Where bells and butlers
 Places to put things in
 Rob days of discovery
 I ask *what* have you to find
 Where can you pick things up?

*(Diana indicating an ash tray, he reverently
 pockets half a manilla.)*

There, there! my good people . . . Don't
 ask me to say anything . . . but *forgive me*.

(Retiring semi-despondently to his throne.)

The grandest of us
 Have phases of diminished elasticity
 The most expansive
 Periodically contract
 Can it be possible I am getting narrow?

*(Looking with new interest at Diana, who is still
 more preparedly posing.)*

And is it likely that women have other quali-
 ties besides their smell?

I have learnt something to-day
 And in exchange
 The spiritual explorer's

Footprints
 Humanize
 The shameless purity
 of that padding on your floor.
 Let them remain
 For ever
 Encouraging
 Your tentative toddle towards other ends . . .
Ossy: O . . . oo . . . oh . . . aah . . . aah!
 thanks offly . . . cocktail?

(The Loony, lifting each cocktail successively from the gold tray handed to him, drinks them all off with appreciation.)

Somebody: Di dear! as you're still looking intense would you mind very much if we left him to you?

Diana: I have never met a genius I couldn't manage yet.

Somebody: You sure you're not getting let down on this one? The fellow uses the oldest-hat blank verse!

Diana: The cosmic form of the idea behind it!

Somebody: Well if you think a drop or two of sulphuric would help you at all . . . send to the chemist.

Picked People evaporate.

(The Loony has laid himself sublimely on a brocaded chaise-longue.

Diana rather at a loss, as she remarks his drowsiness, plays a precocious trump taking off one shoe and stocking.)

Loony (snoozily as he blinks at the little white thing blazing under the electric light):

This little pig . . .

That little pig . . .

(But falls asleep.)

(Diana entirely at a loss, replaces the stocking and shoe . . . and calls—James!)

Diana: Tell the men there is one thousand pounds for any one who will take that to a bath-room . . . and entirely clean it up . . . not boil it you know . . . but any other possible means . . . and oh yes, dress it . . . the Duke's will be about the right size . . . and then determinedly . . . you can bring it back to me.

AFTER THE IMMERSION

(Diana minus one shoe and stocking. The Loony minus one shoe and stocking. They sit on the edge of the chaise-longue wriggling toes thoughtfully up and down . . .)

Diana: You see after all they're very much alike.

Loony (anxiously): I am losing my self respect.

Diana: Oh not at all I assure you . . . you'll feel all right . . . it's only the first five minutes.

Loony: Look here my dear . . . *(resolutely drawing on foot gear)* . . . if you've mistaken me for a blooming canary bird . . .

Well . . . I didn't size you up at first . . .

For you're a woman you are—white . . . pulpy . . . wheedle-em-round your finger would you . . . ?

not me . . . !

You'd like to sap my brain to make a face cream of . . . tack a string to my jaw and pull it . . . 'pretty, pretty' . . . say *Grand* louder for his precious!

You've made a boss shot . . . a holy error . . . thought I depended entirely on me protective cake of mud . . . nothing inside but slosh . . . active because itchy . . .

think you can drain off the creative impulse through a bath tube . . . just because you depend entirely on your tags and tatters *(tearing savagely at the Mechlin on her shoulders)*

through which a miraculous white gleam bursts upon him . . .)

Ah . . . (*clenching his fists . . . to a superhuman brake . . . he sits down on the chair opposite her . . . smoothing his hair from his brow in sudden weariness*)

Ah! you thought you'd got me that time?

Diana: I maintain that any time will do.

SILENCE

Diana: Stand up—Sir—and dress your soul for dinner. Throw out your chest and don't walk heels first . . . remember

It takes a genius five minutes to acquire what it takes five centuries to breed into us . . .

Those tirades about the Grand are *the* thing . . . dock them a bit . . . muddle people up more . . . But when you're not holding forth you must be like us . . . you (*hypnotically*) are like us . . .

No use picking up cigar ends—*Here* . . . are the whole cigars . . . (*handing him the box . . . the genius picks out a cigar entirely at his ease*).

Here the Grand is the infinitesimal . . . nothing so vulgar as the obvious.

When you talk to a Duchess treat her as if she were a prostitute at the same time hold fast to the ethics of property.

Shown a picture . . . look at the left-hand corner . . .

A book? pass an innocuous finger-nail down the back of the binding.

Turn everything upside down and inside out . . . and you'll get on . . . you've got to get on . . . I have just telephoned you to every daily paper in the kingdom and *now* . . .

THE PAMPERERS

look at me with those *indomitable* eyes . . .
(turning to a step) . . .

Dear Duke . . . I must present Houston
 Loon to you . . .

The great Vitalist

. . . Europe raves about him . . . to-
 morrow . . .

Duke: A pleasure . . . ah I see . . . you've got
 a cigar . . .

I'd just like to have your opinion on this
 Benozzo Gozzoli.

Loony (holding his nose carefully to the left-hand corner):
 Are you sure it's a Benozzo Gozzoli? . . . by
 the direction of the scratches . . . you can't
 scratch a Benozzo Gozzoli from right to left
 . . . from the way he put the paint on . . .
 More probably a Genozzo Bozzolini.

My dear . . . *(breathes Diana devoutly)*
 . . . you'll DO.

THE END
 OF THEM ALL