

Sensation of Ligature with Beasts

The girl is playing with her cup and ball on the edge of the forest. Suddenly, the string snaps; the wooden ball rolls across the roots and leaves and into the thicket and the girl chases after, drawing her hood close about her face. Soon she is lost. She hears a woman's voice, singing, high and sweet, the nursery rhyme, "Horse and haddock." The girl moves blindly through the brambles, and the voice grows louder: "Horse and haddock, horse and haddock, I fly like a wild straw." The girl breaks free from the thorns and falls into the clearing. She sees a ferret on its hind legs balanced on a wooden ball.

"Let me take your finger into my mouth," says the ferret.

The girl offers him the forefinger of her left hand. She closes her eyes. She feels beneath her skirts a whirlwind, scraping and swift between her thighs. She shrieks. The girl has never been pricked. She has only plaited straws flat and damp from the mangle. It is the grandmother who splits the bright pipes with the blade. After, in the heat of the day, the grandmother rests on the hawthorn stump, paring her blood-caked fingernails. The girl smells the grandmother's smell—the smell of the hop bin and sulfur. The straws that fly from the neck of her cloak pierce the girl's skin. She struggles to pluck them out but they pierce her fingertips. They slide into the flesh beneath her fingernails. The girl flings her arms to either side. Her palms bristle with straw, and her lower lip, and her nostrils, and the lower lids that curve up around the slight bulge of her eyes. If the grandmother should chance upon her, she might plait the straws and hide the girl's face

behind a pretty yellow mask. But no—the grandmother is an old woman. She has outgrown straw dolls and other fooleries. She does not give the girl corn tassels or licks of the batter, only the mangle and brown stews and woolens. The grandmother goes no farther than the hawthorn stump and that is where she waits for the girl, nodding off, with the brass blade in her apron. In the forest, the girl trembles. The ferret has mounted her shoulder. With lips and teeth, he worries the straws in her earlobes, humming.

Josephine in Finland

She watches the snow, lurching on liver custard in a high-sided coffin topped with artificial walnuts. She realizes that she will be a silent film star, in a strange city of tilted towers, each with a clock face. The thin golden arms of the clocks glitter through the fog. She is standing on the roof of a countinghouse, holding a man's gloved hand for balance. In every direction, the clock arms dazzle like rays from a polygon sun.

Most likely it is another life.

The Fluxus of the Humoral Body

For a broken heart, boil 15 pulped medlars, 2 white sugar loaves, 8 drams macerated roses. If his semen is cold as spring water, cleanse yourself with cotton rags, for this semen, left overlong on any part, will mark the skin. Moreover, this semen will numb the flesh to further sensation, painful or otherwise.