

luncheon on the grass

by Jerry Ratch

I had a dream, I remember, where I am in this painting, Luncheon on the Grass. My dress was thrown off and the picnic basket, filled with bread and fruit, is spilled out upon it, and I am sitting nude on my underclothing, with two gentlemen fully dressed in frock coats and ties as they lounge around with me on the grass under the trees. One breast bulges out from beneath my arm as I stare out toward the world, my great nakedness stark against the dark backdrop of trees and shade.

While further up behind us another woman bathes in the river beside a rowboat. She's bending over and holding her white underclothing up with one hand, while reaching down for water with the other to wash herself off.

And another time where I was standing at a dance, with you looking into my face, speaking the utmost poetry. We were in Paris, at an outdoor pavilion, and all of your painter friends were there. And another time we were at the luncheon of a boating party, with my hand propped under my chin, my mouth full and red, my face framed by the light curls of my hair, with my blouse opened at the neck so you could see right in, anytime you wanted.

And finally, virginity has ended. My real virginity, of the soul, I mean. It was like a curse upon the land, where I am lying naked on my back. And now the fox who sleeps with me lays his paw on my breast as he watches me closely, with brightened eyes. The toes of one foot crossed over the other as I lie there, with a plucked flower in my hand.

